

THE STORY OF A LITTLE POET

SOPHIE CRAMP
TAYLOR







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The Story of a Little Poet

To my dear son
Ratclyffe from
mother

1912.



The
Story of a Little Poet

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Prefatory Note

THE characters of the three children in this story—the hero and his brother and sister—are taken from life. Woven throughout the book is a collection of original sayings that have been jotted down from time to time during the early childhood of the three children, and also of some letters they wrote and poetry they composed.

S. C. T.

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The Story of a Little Poet

CHAPTER I

IT was not surprising that many turned to take a second look at him or stopped to gaze more closely in his face; for he was a very attractive-looking child at any time, but especially so on this beautiful afternoon in early May.

His light brown cloth knickerbockers and dark brown velvet jacket were very becoming, while the brown velvet sailor hat set off the golden locks and clear white skin to perfection. The short jaunty jacket was open, displaying a daintily tucked white shirt-front.

He was not very tall for his age, which fact, together with his finely cut features, and loose wavy ringlets falling over his ears and about his neck, gave him the appearance of a child not more than seven years of age, though in reality he was nearly nine.

It had never occurred to him that he was beautiful, and as he stood on the corner of one of the thoroughfares in a large city, with his hands in his pockets, gazing with wonder and curiosity at an old organ-grinder, a few feet distant from him, he was quite unconscious of the admiring eyes turned upon him, and the frequent remarks made about his face and hair.

He had been standing still for some moments, looking steadily at the old man, who was indeed a forlorn

object. His clothes were threadbare, his face thin and drawn; and, saddest of all, he was blind. A printed band around his hat stated that fact; it was this that made him especially attractive to Paul Arlington.

"I am blind," he read, and stood as if rooted to the spot, so great was the effect upon his little sensitive heart.

Finally he took from his pocket a small leather purse, and, taking from it a silver quarter, he stepped up close to the organ, and dropped it in the tin cup that lay on top to receive whatever "Charity" was disposed to give.

The old man heard the welcome jingle, bowed his thanks, then took the silver piece out to place it safely in his pocket. When he felt its size, he involuntarily bowed again, very low indeed, for it was rarely that he had the pleasure of taking a quarter from the cup; and such a generous giver surely deserved especial thanks.

"But," thought the old man, "whoever he was, he has passed on by this time, and there is no use in my thanking him again."

He was greatly mistaken, however, for the generous giver had not passed on, but was still standing quite near him. Indeed, he leaned over the old man, and his sweet voice said, "Isn't this a beautiful day, sir? I know that it is a good one for your business, for so many people are on the street."

The wrinkled hand dropped the handle, and the blind man turned his head in the direction of the voice, rolling his sightless eyes in a manner that made little Paul's heart beat quite fast, so dreadful did it seem to him. The old man's lips moved as though he was trying to speak, but Paul did not hear a sound, though he put his

head down quite close. Suddenly the organ-grinder turned his head in its former position, and, taking the handle of the organ again, continued grinding out, "There's beauty in a merry heart," as though nothing had happened to interrupt him.

"Something must be the matter with his voice. He may have a bad cold, and can't talk, or perhaps he is a little deaf," thought Paul. "I will speak louder." So he leaned over so closely that the golden locks mingled with the long straggly white ones of the old man's; then he said quite loudly, "I guess you did not hear me, sir. Is n't this a beautiful afternoon?"

"There is no mistake this time. It is meant for me, after all," thought the old man, for although the voice had seemed quite near before, he had come to the conclusion that it could not be intended for him, and that the words must have been meant for some one else. But when he felt the pressure of a small hand on his shoulder, and heard the same childish voice close to his ear, he knew that there could be no mistake, and it thrilled his heart with an unspeakable joy to think a little child thought it worth his while to speak a few kind words to him. Again he dropped the handle, and, turning his head as before, said in a very husky and trembling voice, "Who are you, child?"

"My name is Paul Arlington. I am visiting my grandma on Spruce Street. Her name is Mrs. Wesley. You know her, don't you?"

The old man shook his head, and Paul was surprised to learn he did not know her. "I thought everybody knew who Grandma Wesley was," he continued. "But I will bring her around some time, and make you acquainted with her."

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The organ-grinder actually smiled at this, and stretched out his hand to feel the little figure at his side; he longed to look at him if only for an instant, for his sweet voice and innocent manners had quite won his heart.

"I love to visit my grandma," continued Paul, after a pause, "because there is so much to see in the city, so many different kinds of people on the streets, and I love to watch them all. You see, I live in the country, where sometimes I do not see any one on the road for an hour."

"You do not like to watch poor people like me, do you?" asked the old man, growing very much interested, and forgetting all about his organ.

"Yes, I always watch the poor more than any others," replied Paul, placing his hand on the old man's shoulder as he spoke. "I love them, and always wonder how and where they live, and wish I was a millionaire so I could buy nice homes for them all."

"Would you mind stooping a bit, child, and let me feel your face and hair? For I am blind, you see, and it is the only way I have of telling how people look."

"Certainly," answered Paul, stooping immediately and taking off his hat, while the old man passed his hand softly over the golden locks, then the face and shoulders. "An angel's face," he muttered, as though speaking to himself. But Paul caught the words, and laughed outright as he straightened up again, and said, "Oh, dear, no. I'm not an angel. You don't know what a bad boy I am sometimes. I can get dreadful cross too, and you know angels never do," and Paul laughed again, at the very thought.

"Are you alone, child?"

"Yes, all alone this afternoon. Grandma says she thinks I am old enough now to take walks by myself when I come to the city. I am very glad I saw you and became acquainted with you, Mr. — What did you say your name was?"

"Graves," replied the old man.

"Graves!" repeated Paul, thinking the name suited the organ-grinder exactly, and that he never saw a graver man in all his life. But he said aloud, "I am very glad to know you, Mr. Graves, and if you will tell me where you live, I will go to see you some time." — "For," thought Paul, "this will be a good chance for me to see how organ-grinders live."

"Where I live, is no place for the likes of you," said the organ-grinder, shaking his head sorrowfully.

"Oh, that doesn't matter. I don't mind where it is. I would go," said Paul, thinking perhaps the old man was ashamed of his poor home. "Do you live all alone?"

"Only me and my little Hester, and it's a good piece from here."

"Is your Hester Mrs. Graves?"

"No, she is my little girl; my poor little lame daughter, who keeps house for me, and —" Here the old man paused, and brushed a tear from his eye with the back of his hand, shaking his head all the while; his hands and even his body seemed to shake at intervals, as though he had a chill.

Paul's little heart was overflowing with sympathy when he saw the emotion caused by speaking of his lame child, and for a moment he could think of nothing to say, while he thought, "I wish I could do something for him." And his beautiful blue-gray eyes blinked away

in a quick nervous fashion that they had when anything appealed to his sympathies.

Finally he said, "You need not tell me any more about your little girl if it makes you sad. Of course I would like to hear all about her, but maybe some other time you can tell me better."

The old man had controlled himself somewhat, and was about to speak again, when they were both startled by a voice close beside them, —

"What do you mean by making yourself so familiar with this child?" said an officer, addressing the blind man.

"I'm not making myself familiar. He spoke to me first, and sure there can be no harm in my answering the child. I meant no harm, sir; I meant no harm," repeated the blind man, in a trembling voice, turning on his stool and grasping the handle of the organ, trying to appear indifferent to Paul, for he thought, "There is no knowing what this officer might do. Drag me to the station-house, perhaps, and such a disgrace would surely kill my little Hester."

"No! indeed, he meant no harm at all, sir," said Paul, boldly. "He is a very good man, and every time I come to the city I mean to speak to him."

"Tut, tut, little fellow. This is no place for you, and I think you had better be running home to your parents, for I am sure they do not know you are alone on the streets, and selecting companions such as he," said the officer, pointing to the poor trembling organ-grinder as he spoke.

A number of pedestrians had been attracted by the little scene, and surrounded Paul with eager faces, anxious to hear the conversation.

"My parents do not live here," said Paul; "but my grandma knows I have gone out for a walk, and she would not care at all if I talked to Mr. Graves."

Every one smiled at this; even the officer was greatly amused, while with the others he looked down on the sweet upturned face and the dignified little figure standing quite close to the old organ-grinder, as though to protect him and to take his part, no matter what the officer might do or say.

"Well! well! you are a strange little chap," he said, speaking kindly, and patting Paul on the shoulder.

"Oh! isn't he a dear?" said a lady.

"I never saw such a lovely face," remarked another. "And to think of him talking to an organ-grinder, and so indignant at the officer for interfering."

"Well! I would interfere too," another lady spoke up. "If he were my child, he would not be out alone wandering the streets of a large city."

Suddenly Paul grew conscious of the many eyes turned upon him, and thought he had better be moving on. He stooped over quite close to the organ-grinder first, however, and said, "Won't you please tell me where you live, Mr. Graves? for I would like to go and see you some day, just as soon as I can." He took from his pocket a little memorandum book, and stood with it open, pencil in hand, with a very business-like air, waiting to hear what the old man said.

He hesitated a moment, then in a husky voice said: "Number sixteen, Hunter Street, third floor," for "who knows," he thought, "maybe this child might send some one to help my little Hester. Then I can die in peace."

Hester was all he thought of nowadays, and it was

for her support only he desired to live; for this reason he would risk again the officer's displeasure by answering the child's question. But this time the officer said nothing. With an amused smile he watched all Paul did with great curiosity.

After putting the address down, Paul placed the book in his pocket and said sweetly, "Good-by, Mr. Graves." His expression and voice changed somewhat when he glanced up at the officer and said the same to him; then noticing the many ladies and gentlemen looking at him with smiling faces, he raised his hat politely, and making his way through them walked rapidly down the street with his hands in his pockets, while they looked after him in wonder and admiration.

CHAPTER II

ON, on, he walked, never looking to the right or left, gazing straight ahead, with a far-off look in his eyes. He passed all the beautiful stores, with their gayly decked windows, which had been such an attraction when he first started out that afternoon, but now he did not even glance at them, for he was thinking of the poor blind man, and wishing he was very rich, that he might be able to buy him new clothes and plenty to eat every day.

"I know he is half starved," he thought, "for I have seen half-starved children brought to 'Glenwood Home,' and I know the look. It is the worst kind a poor person can have, and makes me shiver when I think of it." Suddenly his face brightened, as though a sunbeam had struck it, and taking his hands from his pockets, he clasped and unclasped them again and again in perfect ecstasy at the bright idea that had just occurred to him.

"It will be the very thing. I will invite him out to Beechwood to spend the day. He can bring his little lame daughter too; even if he is blind, he can feel the grass under his feet, and enjoy the cool breezes while he sits under the shady trees, and rests from his organ all day. I will take him a row on the creek too, give him lots to eat, and maybe mother will find some better clothes for him."

"I am so glad I happened to think of it. I will ask mother as soon as I get home. I am sure she will not say no." So his thoughts ran, when suddenly he thought he had better return to his grandmother's and consult her about it. Then looking around him for the first time since he left the organ-grinder, he found he had wandered into a neighborhood entirely new and strange to him.

No matter which way he turned, he could see no familiar object. "I must be lost," he thought, but that fact did not seem to alarm him at all, and he concluded to ask some one to direct him to his grandmother's house. He was just about to address a man passing near him, when he was arrested by the sound of loud, angry voices in a narrow street just below the corner where he stood, and, turning, he saw a group of ragamuffins surrounding an object on a cellar door.

At first he could not see what it was. He started to walk toward them, his curiosity greatly aroused, when they separated, and with jeers and laughter made way for the leader of the group, a boy of about twelve years, who was dragging a poor ragged little girl roughly by the arm. "Git up, git up, yer lazy thing, and don't pretend yer sick," he shouted, while his companions laughed the louder, as though they thought it a great joke.

When Paul saw the poor, thin, ragged child, with haggard face, matted hair, and sleeves actually hanging from her shoulders in shreds, he stood for a moment as if petrified.

In his whole life he had never witnessed a scene like this, nor heard a coarse word; in fact, it was the first time that he had ever seen a cruel act, — was it any won-

der he was shocked? The old organ-grinder was forgotten entirely; his condition paled into insignificance compared with that of this forlorn child.

With every nerve tingling in his body, his face flushed with the inward emotion this scene had caused, he ran up to the heartless leader, and held his arm in a grip of which one would not have thought him capable.

"Don't! don't do that again!" he said, looking right into the eyes of Bill Jones, the terror among the children of that neighborhood.

Had an angel dropped suddenly from the skies in their midst, these children could not have been more surprised, when they turned and saw a beautiful boy, and heard a sweet voice speak words in behalf of the little waif they were taking such pleasure in tormenting.

Bill Jones had dropped the arm of the child, and turned fiercely to see who dared interfere with him; but imagine his surprise when he saw a face upturned to his, such as he had never seen before, and heard a voice trembling with emotion, imploring him to cease his rough treatment of the poor neglected child.

For the first time in his life he actually felt ashamed of himself. He could not have told why, but somehow Paul's gaze seemed to penetrate into his very heart. He did not attempt to shake off the hand that still held him firmly, and Paul continued, —

"You did not mean to hurt her, did you?" hardly thinking it was possible for any human being actually to desire to cause pain and suffering to a weak and helpless creature, and that one a little child.

Bill Jones only shuffled his feet and shrugged his shoulders at this question. Then Paul stooped over

the child who lay on the cellar door, with closed eyes, moaning occasionally, and apparently unconscious of what had just taken place.

He pushed back the matted hair from her face, and tears came to his eyes when he saw the big bruises on her arms, caused by Bill Jones's cruelty. So sweetly did he talk to her that the group of ragamuffins looked on in silent wonder, with wide-open eyes. They had never heard such words in their lives, nor ever seen a child like this, so it was not surprising that they were silenced.

"Won't you open your eyes, little girl," he asked, "and tell me what is the matter?" But the child only moaned in reply.

By this time Bill Jones had gained some courage and thought he would try to make excuses for his actions.

"Well! she's jist a lazy thing, anyhow, and sits all day a sucken her fingers. She won't work, or beg, or anythink."

"But can't you see she is sick, and how can she work?" said Paul.

"That's only a trick of hern; she hain't sick any more en I am. Her mother says she's lazy, and won't help her earn a cent," continued Bill Jones.

"Well! I know she is sick," persisted Paul, sitting down beside the child and raising her head in his lap. "And she is nearly starved too," he went on, gazing on the haggard face. "I have seen children brought to Glenwood Home who were sick from not having enough to eat, and I know how they look."

"Yes, I think she is starvin'," a little girl ventured to say, "fer she told me this mornin' she had nothink to eat fer two days. Her mother drinks all the time and

wants Moll to beg fer her, and if she don't git anythink, she beats her."

"Oh, how dreadful!" said Paul, interested now in the new speaker, who seemed to know a great deal about Moll.

"Do you know where she lives?" he asked.

"Yes, right over there in that cellar room."

"In a cellar room!" exclaimed Paul, more and more amazed. He had never heard of any one living in a cellar before. "She shall never go back to it again," he thought. "I will take her to grandma's with me, and then I will get her into Glenwood Home."

"Do you feel better, little girl?" he asked, seeing that she was opening her eyes and staring in a bewildered way into his face, as he bent over her. She had been somewhat dazed for a time, and had not realized what had just taken place, but now she was coming to herself again, and the first thing she seemed to be conscious of was a sweet voice, that sounded far off, but was growing nearer all the time. Then she opened her eyes and saw a beautiful face bending over her, surrounded by thick golden locks, and heard the same voice now quite near.

She could scarcely realize at first that it was a real live child; it seemed to her more like one of those strange fancies that her poor little tired brain had so often conjured, since she had become so weak and ill; but no, that could not be, for the face still remained, and was growing more distinct every moment.

"Will some one go and buy some bread or biscuit?" asked Paul of the group. "She is getting better now; and perhaps if she has something to eat, she will feel strong enough to walk."

"I know where there's a shop," said Bill Jones, "and I'll git yer some."

"All right," said Paul. "What is your name?"

"Bill Jones," he replied.

"Please get me as much as you can with this, Bill," said Paul, taking a dime from his purse, while the children all made eyes at each other, and were about to remark that Bill had better not be trusted with money, and that they knew he would never return. No one, however, had the courage to say this, for all the children were in fear and dread of gaining his ill-will. There was no telling what he would do if he discovered the one who told, and so they only looked and listened in silence when Paul said, "Here's the money. Get as much as you can."

"You feel better now, don't you, little girl?" he asked. "I have sent for some bread for you. I know you are hungry."

Moll opened her eyes now very wide; it was all coming back to her. Where was Bill Jones, with his ugly face, his threats and jeers? She looked about her wildly for a moment, but did not see him.

"Just a few minutes, Moll," continued Paul, "and Bill will be here with some bread for you."

What! Bill Jones gone to buy her bread? How strange! and what was the meaning of it all? She stared into the face bending over her, then at those surrounding her. She was bewildered and unable to comprehend the sudden change in her companions.

"What could have happened?" she thought. Soon she began to realize that the child leaning over her must have something to do with it all. She tried to take hold of him with her trembling fingers, that he

might not vanish away; for somehow she felt perfectly safe as long as she could see him.

At this moment they were all astonished to see Bill Jones actually returning, and in his arms a bag of biscuits.

"I got two for a cent, 'cause they was a little stale," he said, grinning, pleased with what he thought a very good bargain, as he placed the bag beside Paul.

"Thank you," said Paul, in such a polite manner that the little ragamuffins made eyes at each other again. They had been astonished at Bill Jones's willingness to perform the errand, and were now amazed to find that he had really purchased the biscuit as Paul had desired, and returned with them.

The starving child clutched wildly at Paul when she saw the biscuits. Her first impulse was to grab one, that she might quickly ease the gnawing pain of intense hunger; but something in the face above restrained her, and she trembled all over as she lay and watched him break off a piece, and when he handed it to her, she acted like a little wild animal, not taking time in her eagerness to chew it.

Paul then reached out a row of biscuit on a piece of paper toward the children, and told them each to take one, which they readily did, without a second invitation.

In a moment every crumb had disappeared. They reminded him of animals which he had seen at the Zoo, quickly devouring what was thrown to them, then looking up, silently begging for more.

"I am sorry I cannot give you more to-day," he said. "You see, Moll is hungrier than you, and there are only a few left. But some day I shall come again and bring a large basket of good things."

Again all made eyes at each other, and shuffled their feet, not knowing what to do or say.

The very fact of Paul trusting him with money created a desire in the heart of Bill Jones to show this strange child that he was not as bad as he perhaps had first imagined.

He knew well enough what his companions thought when the money was placed in his hand, and he determined that for once he would surprise them. He could not imagine why this boy should have so trusted him, after what he saw; but innocent little Paul knew nothing of the world and its wickedness, and did not realize that because Bill Jones was cruel he would very likely be dishonest too.

And it was after all his innocence and trustfulness that appealed to Bill Jones in a way that he had never felt before. Had Paul acted in any other way, very likely he would have taken a different stand toward him altogether.

"I kin tell yer all about her ef yer want ter know," he said, awkwardly shuffling his feet, and thrusting his hands deep into his pockets.

"I wish you would," said Paul, breaking off pieces of biscuit and handing them to Moll.

"Well! I know she has lived in the cellar over there all her life, and she allus tries her best to git out of beggin'. Her mother's a tougher, I tell yer; but she can't make her beg, even if she beats her nearly to death. She jist makes up her mind she won't do it, and she won't. She hain't got no father or sister or brother, but jist lives alone with her mother, and she's drunk all the time. Golly! I'm afeard of her myself, when I see her shaking a club at the cellar door. Hain't that so?" he asked, turning to his companions.

"Yes, 't is," they replied, for they knew even Bill had been seen to run when Moll's mother was in a rage and appeared at the door with a club.

Paul's eyes were filling very fast as he listened to this harrowing tale and imagined what Moll's life must be in such a home.

"If she is beaten so much at home, how is it you could be so cruel to her when she comes out?" he asked, looking up in Bill Jones's face with a searching look that made the latter drop his eyes. "I should think you would all feel so sorry for her that you would be very kind to her when she comes on the street," continued Paul.

No one made any reply to this for a moment. Then Bill said, "Enyhow she's jist lazy, I thought, and she'd better be off beggin' when her mother tells her to."

"No one can beg or work when they are sick as Moll," said Paul, handing her the last piece of biscuit; "but perhaps you did not know she was so ill."

"No, I did n't mean ter hurt her," said Bill, feeling more at ease to find Paul was actually trying to excuse him.

"I want to tell you all that I am going to take Moll away with me if she can walk," said Paul, taking a circular from his pocket as he spoke.

"Do you see that beautiful place on the front page?" he asked, handing the circular to Bill Jones, while the others closed in around him to get a glimpse. "That is Glenwood Home," he explained. "It is a place for poor children who live in cellars like poor Moll. If I can get her mother to sign her name inside, she will belong to the Home, and no one can take her away."

The children all listened with the greatest interest

and curiosity, each taking a turn in examining the circular closely, and gazing with wonder at the beautiful stone building, with its sloping lawns and large shade trees. They thought Moll fortunate indeed, and all envied her, and wished that they had been rudely treated, that they too might go away with her to such a home, with this beautiful child.

"Moll will never know what it is to be hungry there," continued Paul. "She will have nice new clothes, plenty to eat, and kind teachers to teach her how to read and write, to sew and cook. Dear! dear! how I wish I could take you all there!" and he gazed at the little ragamuffins wistfully.

"Would n't you like to leave the hot dusty city, and play in the fields, and pick flowers?" he asked. "The orchards at Glenwood Home look like fairyland now; the trees are covered with blossoms. Oh, I wish you could see them."

It all sounded very beautiful to the children, but they did not know what to say; they only wished he could stay there always, that they might watch him and hear him talk.

CHAPTER III

DOWN the narrow street walked an officer, wondering whether the crowd he saw on the cellar door was surrounding a drunken parent, which was not an uncommon occurrence in that neighborhood, it being one of the worst in Philadelphia. Poor little neglected children swarmed there in miserable crowded homes, like so many bees, and were not much better than their parents, being taught from infancy to steal, lie, and perform all manner of wicked acts in order to obtain a few cents for their parents to spend, generally for liquor.

Some of the rickety houses were crowded to overflowing with the most degraded of humanity; and in this awful spot walked an innocent child that lovely afternoon in May, like a bright diamond dropped into a dark and muddy pool. He knew nothing of the world's wickedness, and had a most tender and sympathetic little heart, which made him forget everything else in the world when it was appealed to as to-day by the scenes on the streets of a large city.

The officer, whose duty it was to pass through this neighborhood several times a day, had witnessed many curious scenes, but never one like the present. As he approached, one of the boys exclaimed, "Here comes the Cop!" and several of the children started to run; but seeing Paul was unconcerned, not appearing to be

the least alarmed, they concluded to stay, for, like Moll, they began to feel perfectly safe in his presence.

It was a very unusual sight this officer saw. A refined and handsomely dressed boy sitting on a cellar door, and leaning up against him a poor, sick, ragged girl.

They all stepped aside when he came up, and he stood for a moment too surprised to speak.

Paul did not wait for him, however.

"Is n't it sad to look at her, sir? She is very ill, and I am going to take her to Glenwood Home, where she will have plenty to eat, and get strong and well."

"See, here it is," he said, handing the circular to the astonished officer. "Everybody will be kind to her there; and if you will please stay here and mind her, I will go over to Moll's home and get her mother to sign the paper; then she will belong to the home, you see."

"Well! well!" said the officer, drawing a long breath as he glanced through the pages of the circular, "wonders will never cease. How did you get in this neighborhood, child, and where did you come from?"

"Only from Grandma's, Mr. Officer. But I was very busy thinking, and walked so far I got lost. But I am glad I did now, for I have found Moll, and am going to take her from her dark cellar home."

While he spoke he leaned Moll up against the house, and taking the circular from the officer, started to walk across the street.

"Come back here, child," the officer said, taking him by the arm. "That is no place for you to enter. Tell me, is it your work to go into the highways and byways and gather the poor for this home?"

"This is the first one I have found all by myself," replied Paul. "And please let me go, for I must hurry; Grandma will not know where I am so long."

"Little fellow, I do not know what she would say if she knew in what neighborhood you were spending the afternoon. I cannot permit you to enter Moll's miserable home. Come, leave the circular with me, and I will try some time to get her mother to sign it, though I doubt if she can write; and perhaps I can send the child to the Home, for I do feel sorry for the little waif; I fear she will not live much longer under the cruel treatment of her mother. But, law me! there are so many such as Moll, I would be picking them up all day did I once begin."

"Are there really more like poor Moll?" asked Paul, clasping his hands and speaking so earnestly, while tears actually filled his eyes.

"Oh, yes, hundreds, child; but you must be going home, and never enter this neighborhood again."

"But I must take Moll with me, indeed I must, Mr. Officer," said Paul, decidedly. "I could not sleep all night if I knew she was in her cellar room again, and perhaps beaten by her mother, as Bill tells me she is. I could not leave her here," he continued, stepping back to Moll's side.

The sick child had been listening intently to this conversation, and knew that a rescuer had come, a little angel of mercy, to take her from her cruel mother to a beautiful home.

"Take me! Oh, take me!" she suddenly cried, stretching out her little thin arms toward Paul beseechingly. "She will be after me and beat me 'cause me hain't got no money."

"Never mind, little girl, do not be frightened," said Paul, reassuringly. "She won't ever get you again; and as soon as the paper is signed, we will go."

"Gracious me! this is a puzzler," said the officer, very much touched by the scene, however. "I have been in predicaments before, but this beats them all. What will your grandma say if she sees you return with this child?"

"Oh, sir, she will think it all right, indeed she will. My grandma is one of the managers of Glenwood Home. You can see her name in the circular, and so are my father and mother. My grandma would be glad if I brought a poor, sick, little girl to her home; for she loves the poor, and is always doing something for them."

The officer stood for a moment busily thinking, and finally came to the conclusion that it would be all right, if what the little fellow said were true; for his people must be greatly interested in the poor to be managers of a home, and perhaps they would not object to receiving a waif for it.

"If you are very sure your folks won't object, I will go over and see what I can do with Moll's mother," he said.

"Oh, thank you!" said Paul, handing him the circular again.

"Stand back, children, and skip home, all of you! Give the boy room to breathe!" said the officer, stepping from the midst of the crowd that was increasing every moment.

"Oh, they are doing me no harm, Mr. Officer," said Paul. "I love to have them around me, and I am breathing all right. I will come soon again," he said,

addressing the children, "and bring you all something nice, if you will promise me you will never be cruel to any one again."

The children all nodded their heads. "And you, Bill, will always be my friend if you take care of the little children down here, and do not let them get hurt. You are the strongest and largest of them all. Won't you promise me?" and Paul extended his hand and grasped the great soiled coarse one of Bill Jones, the terror of the neighborhood, and held it firmly while he gazed in his eyes and waited for an answer.

No one had ever shaken hands before with Bill; no one had ever spoken a kind word to him or said he could be his friend. Was it any wonder that this little street Arab was at a loss for words, or was ignorant as to how he should act?

He took off his hat with his disengaged hand, and his stiff black hair stood up like bristles over his entire head, which gave to his face a most weird appearance.

Although little Paul was unused to seeing children such as these, he was not in the least frightened. He simply thought Bill Jones looked so because he was poor, and perhaps had no one to speak kindly to him, or teach him how to look clean and neat.

"I am waiting," said Paul, still holding his hand, while Bill remained silent, with his head turned away. He was experiencing that queer sensation again, so new to him, and it seemed impossible for him to find his voice, though he tried to speak several times. Finally he cleared his throat and said, quite low, "I'll promise yer."

"I knew you would," said Paul. "And if you see

any little children sick like Moll, you take care of them and be kind to them until you send me word, won't you?"

"Yes, if yer tell me where yer house be."

"I will write it down on a piece of paper," said Paul, "so you won't forget." And immediately he tore a small sheet from his memorandum book, and wrote on it his name and address, and handed it to Bill.

"Do you work, Bill?"

"No, I hain't ever done any honest work."

"Well, then, I will tell my grandma about you. She often gets work for boys who have nothing to do."

Now, Bill actually felt a stinging sensation in his eyes which made him blink, and that queer feeling still continued to be felt which he was at a loss to understand. It was only the influence of a few kind words that had penetrated the hard, coarse exterior of this poor, neglected boy, whose nature every year had seemed to be growing harder, but who was still responsive to the magic touch of love.

In the mean time the officer had gone off in search of Moll's mother, and found her just awakening from a drunken sleep. She was sober enough, however, to understand all the officer said.

"An' sure she kin go wid yez, if that's all yez be afther. She's nary good ter me, and allus wus a sinseless brat; Oi'll be bound they won't be afther kapen her long," was all that she said.

She managed to make some kind of a scrawl on the paper the officer laid before her; then, without further talk, he hurried back to Paul, who was overjoyed to learn that the paper was signed, and that Moll now actually belonged to Glenwood Home.

"Now see if you can stand, Moll Maloney, for this is a happy day for you if you can," said the officer, assisting her to her feet. "Now steady; try your best. I guess she can manage it, little fellow."

Paul watched her very closely as he assisted the officer in raising her on her feet; for if she was not able to stand, he could think of no possible way of getting her to his grandmother's house. He was delighted to find that she was not only able to stand, but could even walk with assistance; so he, with the officer, kept a hand under each arm as they slowly moved toward the corner, where they were to take a car. When they arrived there was no car in sight, so Moll was placed on a step to rest while Paul and the officer held a conversation. At a safe distance stood the crowd of ragamuffins who had followed them with Bill Jones in the lead.

"Why is it, little fellow, you take such an interest in the poor?" asked the officer.

Paul clasped his hands, blinked his eyes, and sighed, then said very slowly, "It must be because they never seem to have any one to love them or care for them, and it is such a dreadful thing to live in the world with no one to love you, don't you think so, Mr. Officer?"

The officer coughed, cleared his throat, took out his handkerchief and rubbed his nose, giving two or three little snuffles, and then said, "I guess you're right, little chap. It's a pretty tough world to live in when you have no one to love you or care much whether you are living or dead;" and the officer thought of his wife and little daughter sleeping in the cemetery, and could think of no one living who would care very much if he too was laid beside them.

"And then," continued Paul, "I am afraid they are often sick and suffering like Moll, and I do not like to think of that. To be very poor must be dreadful, but to be poor and sick both must be the worst thing in the world."

"What a strange little fellow you are! I am afraid you are too tender-hearted for a boy, and will have a pretty tough time of it making your way through the world," said the officer, looking down in the sweet face.

"Do you really think I shall?" asked Paul, in such earnestness that the officer could not help smiling, although he was quite touched, and he added quickly, "Well, perhaps not, after all. You don't seem to be afraid of anything, and are a very brave little fellow, I think."

"I want to be *very* brave and strong," said Paul, "because when I am a man I intend to help Dr. Andrews work among the poor all the time. Then I —" but right here the conversation was interrupted by the approaching car.

The officer had written a few lines on a slip of paper and gave it to Paul, telling him to be sure and give it to his grandmother as soon as he returned home.

"Good-by," called Paul to the children, raising his hat very politely. "I will come back again some day to see you all."

As the two entered the car, every eye was turned toward them, and the hardest heart could not help but be touched by the scene.

A beautiful boy, with a head and face that would have served as a model for an artist, assisting to a seat a poor ragged child, who leaned against him confidently.

Paul did not notice the many eyes turned upon him, so busy was he with Moll, watching her every motion with a most pathetic expression, especially when she closed her eyes and seemed to have fallen off to sleep. He wondered what he should do if he could not awaken her sufficiently to get her on her feet again when it was time to get out. He finally came to the conclusion that perhaps it was a good thing, after all, for her to take a nap; she might be stronger and better able to walk from the car to his grandmother's.

CHAPTER IV

“**I**T is strange where he can be so long. He never stayed away such a length of time before,” thought Grandma Wesley, walking back and forth from the window to the door, growing more and more anxious every moment.

Her daughter Helen, a young lady of about eighteen years of age, was practising at the piano. Several times she arose and joined her mother at the door, looking anxiously up and down the street.

“Well, mother, I do hope this is the last time you will permit him to go out alone when he comes to visit us. That which I have often predicted has now come to pass,” remarked this young lady, when for the fifth time she joined her mother at the door.

“It seems to me, Helen dear, that a boy nearly nine years of age is perfectly able to take care of himself as far as taking a short walk is concerned. I do not think it wise that a boy of his years should not have a little freedom of action. I suppose he has simply seen something that has interested him, and forgotten all about the time.”

“That is just what worries me,” said little Paul’s young aunt, in her impulsive way. “If he is detained by anything, I know it is a street fakir or a beggar, for you know how interested he always is in them, and how he watches them, and even wants to talk to them. If

he were like any other child, I should not be in the least alarmed, but he has such strange and unnatural fancies about the poor that, to tell the truth, I never have any peace when I know he is out until I see him back again with us. I know he would go off with any of them if he were asked. Now, mother dear, you know he would," she continued, while they both stood on the step, looking first in one direction, then another, for a glimpse of the little runaway.

"I do not exactly agree with you, daughter. He is better able to take care of himself than you imagine, and as to strange fancies, I do not think you can call them such. It is only that he has an extremely sympathetic nature and it causes him to be affected by, and to notice, many things another child would not even see. He will outgrow this trait to a great extent, I am sure as he grows older, and these things of course will not affect him then as they do now."

"Well! as long as they do affect him, I shall never have an easy mind when he is out on the streets alone, and I, for one, only hope he will outgrow this silly notion about the poor very soon. I think that I will get my hat and go in search of him," she continued, turning in the door as she spoke.

"Perhaps you should," said her mother, taking out her watch. "It has been four hours since he left the house, and I will admit I am becoming a little alarmed."

Aunt Helen was just about to leave the house, when she suddenly turned toward her mother with a horrified expression, exclaiming, "Here he comes down the street with his arms around a ragged beggar;" and before her mother could say a word, she was off on a run.

As she approached them, she was shocked to see the terrible condition of the child Paul was assisting.

"My dear boy," she whispered, "you must not get so close to her. Take your arm off; she may have some contagious disease."

"Oh, please don't, Aunt Helen," said Paul, as she tried to separate them. "See! she can hardly stand. She is not sick with anything only a starving sickness, and that won't hurt any one. I found her nearly dead, but I bought her some biscuits, and she is better now, and I am going to take her to Glenwood Home."

He placed his arm around Moll again, notwithstanding Aunt Helen's objections, for he feared she would fall, and said encouragingly, "Only a few steps more Moll; see, just where the lady is standing on the step."

"I am sure your grandma will not allow you to bring her in the house," Aunt Helen whispered again. "And you should have known better than to bring her home."

Poor Moll seemed to realize that this young woman was greatly displeased with her, and also with her little rescuer for bringing her home with him, and she began to tremble from very fright.

"Come right in," said Paul, when they arrived at the house, feeling sure his grandma would not refuse her admittance, notwithstanding what his aunt said to the contrary.

"This is my Grandma Wesley. She is very kind, and you will not be afraid of her," he said.

The poor child shrank back in fear and trembling at the threshold of this house, which to her seemed like a great palace, whilst the elderly lady, in a stiff black silk gown and white lace cap, looked like some dignified queen.

Aunt Helen stepped past them and walked into the house very indignantly, when she saw her mother meet them with a smiling face, and actually tell Paul to bring his companion in.

"Poor little girl, you are not at all well, are you?" she said; and Moll's fears vanished entirely at her kindly voice and manner, but she could not speak, and suffered herself to be led, and treated as they desired.

"She was very hungry, Grandma, and I bought her some biscuits," said Paul, while they passed through the house to the servants' sitting-room in the basement.

"I am very glad you thought of that, Paul, but I think I will give her some broth; then she can rest while we are at our dinner."

"Grandma knows just what to do always," thought Paul, as he watched her, with Jane's assistance, prepare the broth for Moll, while the sick child sat quietly and never uttered a word, but looked from one to another curiously, taking in her new surroundings. It was all so strange and wonderful that she was quite bewildered.

While Paul was away, his grandmother had given instructions to Jane to wash the child, and dress her in some of Aunt Helen's outgrown clothes. "I will throw them down the stairs to you," she said. "And it will be a surprise for Paul when he comes down again after dinner."

"Now, Paul," she said, when they were seated at the table, "tell me all about it. I did not want to ask you before the child."

With hands clasped before him on the table, he began to relate his experiences of the afternoon.

Several times Grandma brushed away a tear, for he spoke so earnestly and seemed to feel so keenly all that

he said, it was quite pathetic to listen to him. He had an odd little way of catching his breath every now and then, whenever relating anything that appealed to his sympathies, and it was very interesting at such times to hear him talk and watch the varied expressions upon his face.

"Before I found Moll I became acquainted with an organ-grinder," he began. "He was blind, and had such a sad face it almost made me cry, Grandma dear. It was all drawn down this way;" and Paul pulled each cheek down as far as he could get it, then rolled his eyes as he remembered the blind man had done. "And his forehead was all in deep wrinkles, like this," he went on, again illustrating by frowning his own forehead. "And his hair hung down over his ears, straight and white. I guess he had no money to go to the barber's. His clothes were old. Oh, I guess about a hundred years, but he was nothing, nothing to poor Moll. I forgot all about him when I saw her, and yet it was thinking about him that made me find her, for you see I was thinking so hard I did not know how far I was going until I found I was lost. Dear! dear! when I heard those children shouting, and saw a big boy drag poor Moll from the ground so roughly, I felt like closing my eyes and thinking it was all a dream." And here Paul leaned back in his chair and pressed both eyelids down as though even now he wished it really had been a dream.

"I ran right up to them, and said, Stop, don't do that again."

"It is a wonder to me that you were not knocked down and killed," interrupted Aunt Helen.

"Why, he never even spoke a cross word to me," said

Paul. "He stopped right away, and they all stopped laughing and let me do just whatever I wanted to. Then I thought, poor little things, I guess they don't know any better. Perhaps if they had some one to teach them, they would all be good. I shook hands with Bill before I left, and he was so quiet and just as good as he could be."

"Goodness!" exclaimed Aunt Helen, with a shudder, "did you wash your hands thoroughly when you came home?"

"I did not think about the dirt," said Paul; "it would not hurt me, anyhow."

"My dear little tender-hearted boy," said Grandma, "it was very sweet of you to rescue that poor child, but you are too young yet to attempt such things by yourself, and wander in strange neighborhoods; and, my darling, you must not try to carry the whole world upon your shoulders; remember all poor children are not sick and suffering like Moll; there are many happy children among the poor, and I have even seen them look rosy and sturdy."

"You are right about Moll. She is simply starving, and I think in a few days, with plenty to eat and good care, she will improve greatly."

"Oh, I forgot the note the officer gave me," said Paul, suddenly recollecting it. "He said I was to give it to you as soon as I returned home."

Grandma put on her glasses and read: —

DEAR MADAM, — This afternoon I found your little grandson in one of the worst neighborhoods in the city, with a poor neglected child he was bent on taking home with him.

I tried to persuade him to leave her with me, and I would

see that the circular was signed, and have her taken to the Home, where he assured me she could be admitted, but he insisted on taking her, and declared his folks would not object to his doing so.

I see in the circular that his parents and you are among the managers, so thought perhaps it would be all right to allow him to take her. But if it should not be just as the little fellow represented, send me word, and I will call for the child. I would like to see her placed in a home, as she is cruelly treated by an intemperate mother, and lately looks as though she was starving. I managed to get her mother to sign the circular.

Very sincerely yours,

JAMES HARRIS,

2004 ——— Street.

“What did he say?” asked Paul.

“He just told me what you did, that Moll was poor and neglected, and that he would like to see her placed in a home, if possible,” replied Grandma.

“Oh, what a kind policeman he is! He did not want me to take Moll at first; but I told him I knew you would be glad if I could save a poor little girl from starving, and you are too, are n’t you, Grandma?” and Paul placed his arms around her neck as he stood by her chair.

“Yes, I am very glad she is saved,” replied Grandma, imprinting a kiss on his forehead.

“There was no use in scolding him for wandering so far away,” she thought, “it has been such a pleasure to him to rescue this little one, and I will not make him unhappy by telling him of dangers he risked in that wretched neighborhood. I know it will never happen again.”

“If I had my way, I would have sent immediately

for an ambulance, and had the child taken to a hospital," said Aunt Helen.

"The child is only weak for want of food," said her mother, "and I am sure has no contagious disease. Paul and I will take her to Glenwood to-morrow if she can stand the journey;" and Grandma smiled as she gazed in the interesting little face upturned to hers, and felt the pressure of the arms around her neck, where Paul still kept them.

"Don't you think that if you give her plenty to eat, and she sleeps all night, she will be a great deal better to-morrow, Grandma?"

"Yes, I am sure she will," replied Grandma.

"May I go down to see her before Jane takes her to bed?"

Grandma answered by taking his hand, and, rising from the chair together, they walked to the basement to see the transformation.

Paul was greatly surprised, as well as delighted, to see Moll sitting in a rocking-chair, clothed in garments neat and whole. Her matted hair had been cut and brushed back from her face, which was as clean as soap and water could make it. Such a change did it make in her appearance, Paul could scarcely believe it was the same child he had led into his grandmother's house.

"She is very sleepy, mum," said Jane, "and is after closing her eyes every little while."

"Poor little child, she is very weak. I would give her some more broth shortly, Jane, and then perhaps it would be best to put her to bed," said Grandma.

"Yes, I think that would be best," said Paul, in his serious, old-fashioned way. "Good-night, Moll," he said; "I hope you will have a good sleep and in the

morning be strong enough to go to Glenwood. Jane will take good care of you."

The weary child only gazed in his face as he leaned over her chair, but she said nothing; and as his grandma and he passed out of the room, she looked after them wistfully.

"I wonder why it is she won't talk?" asked Paul, while hand-in-hand they walked through the halls to the library above.

"It is only because she is weak and somewhat dazed, I suppose, by the sudden change in her surroundings," replied Grandma. "But she appreciates all that is done for her, I am sure of that."

"Oh, yes! I know she is happy and wanted to come with me," said Paul, earnestly; "for when the policeman tried to coax me to leave her with him, she stretched out her arms to me and begged me to take her. When she is stronger she will talk, and tell us all about her cellar home, don't you think so, Grandma?"

"Yes, I am sure she will," replied Grandma; "and now do not think any more about her to-day. We are going to have some singing. Aunt Helen sent home for those two songs, you remember; and they arrived when you were out. We are very anxious to hear them."

She referred to two little poems Paul had composed, and which his mother had found in his pocket one day. His parents both thought them pretty enough to have set to music, and so had it done.

Aunt Helen was already seated at the piano when they entered the library.

"Come, Paul, I have been waiting all the afternoon to hear you sing these songs," she said. "Now do let

the beggar child rest for the night at least." And he did for a time forget all about her, for he was very desirous to hear their opinion of these songs, which were of special interest, on account of the words being entirely his own composition.

He stood by the piano, while his aunt played the prelude, then in a clear sweet voice he sang: —

"The daisies, bright daisies,
 Blooming in the spring,
 Oh, how I love the daisies,
 That come when robins sing.
 The spring with all its flowers
 Has many charms for me,
 Yet of them all I think I love
 The daisy wild and free.

"The daisies, sweet daisies,
 Making earth so gay,
 Oh, how I love the daisies,
 That cheer me every day.
 Springing up in meadows,
 In the early spring
 In the fields and by the brook,
 What happiness they bring.

"Oh, daisies, bright daisies,
 Everywhere I look,
 Oh, how I love the daisies,
 When walking by the brook,
 Or running down the shady lane;
 They greet me everywhere,
 And it seems that when the daisies bloom,
 All is bright and fair."

"Beautiful!" exclaimed Grandma.

"It is simply too sweet for anything," said Aunt Helen, turning around, and throwing her arms around

her little nephew, and kissing him several times in succession in her impulsive way.

"When did you write them?" asked Grandma.

"Oh, a long time ago: last spring, I think. I was walking through the fields one day. I saw daisies growing everywhere, and those verses came to me, and I sat down in the field and wrote them on a slip of paper I found in my pocket. But maybe you will like the lily song better," continued Paul. "It is shorter, but it is my favorite."

"Well, we shall soon see," said Aunt Helen, beginning the accompaniment, and now his voice rose high and clear, the lily song bringing it out in all its fulness.

The servants had collected in the doorway to listen, and catch a glimpse of the little singer, and the beggar girl in the basement had fallen asleep in the rocking-chair, but was aroused from her slumber by the sweet voice, which fascinated her every time she heard it. She looked about her bewildered and startled for a moment. Where was he, she wondered, as she strained her ear and listened attentively, while at the same time a dreadful fear seized her at finding herself alone. What if her mother should suddenly appear and drag her off to the dark cellar again and beat her. She glanced at the window with a look of terror in her eyes, then at the doors, as though she expected to see her scowling face appear at one of them.

One desire took possession of her, quickly to seek her rescuer. He could not be very far away, and in his presence she would feel safe, even if her mother did appear. Trembling, she arose, and made her way to the door, then walked cautiously along a hall which led to a stairway she saw at the end. "This must be the

way," she thought, as she slowly ascended. When she reached the top, she was obliged to sit on the floor for a few moments to rest; then again she was on her feet, and passed through a pantry which opened into a hallway. Her feet sank in the soft carpet, and she looked down upon it with great curiosity, and even stooped once to rub her hand over it. She glanced at the frescoed walls and the beautiful pictures that hung on them as she glided along. She would have stopped to examine all these wonderful things more closely, but the uppermost thought and desire was to reach the singer. To be in his presence was what she sought above everything else; then she would feel safe, and free from the awful dread that filled her heart.

She turned a curve in the hall, then quickly stepped back when she saw the butler and several maids standing in a doorway; but one of the maids had seen her, and stepping up to the child, spoke kindly to her and took her hand and led her to the door, that she too might see and listen to the little singer.

She never uttered a word, but stood in wonder and amazement as she peered into the room, with its handsome furnishings. The mirrors, the glittering chandeliers, the heavy velvet draperies, all filled her with awe, for never before had she ever seen anything so magnificent. Then there was the sweet elderly lady, who greeted her so kindly at the door; but the little singer, standing by the piano at the farther end of the room, was the greatest attraction, after all, for this poor little outcast.

Paul's back was turned toward her, and while he sang, he seemed unconscious of those listening to him. Not a sound was heard except the sweet voice, and the

beggar child gazed with wide-open eyes and mouth, her breath came in short, quick gasps, while she stood as one entranced, framed in the crimson velvet curtains that draped the arched doorway.

She heard every word that he sang very plainly; and although she could not comprehend their fullest meaning, having never been in the country, and knowing nothing of the song of a bird, or the beautiful sight of the water-lilies, and the wide-spreading shade trees which Paul was singing about, yet the song thrilled her with a keen pleasure she could not understand. For the time she was oblivious to everything else, as she listened to these words sung and composed by her little rescuer: —

“Just to glide gently down the stream,
The beautiful Beechwood stream,
Just at the time when the lilies grow,
And the soft summer breezes blow.
With no other sound save the splash of the oar,
And the note of a bird overhead as it soars,
Like the land of the fairies it looks as I row,
Down where the sweet water-lilies grow.

“Just to be screened by the tall spreading trees,
And see the leaves sway in the gentle breeze,
Just to be watching the sunbeams at play,
Among the lilies so bright and gay,
While dipping the oar gently to and fro,
Down where the sweet water-lilies grow.”

As the last note died away, Aunt Helen again clasped him in her arms and showered kisses upon him, exclaiming as she did so, “Why, my dear boy, you are a born poet. Those words are very sweet, and the air is so well adapted to them. Actually, I could almost

see Beechwood Creek while you sang, just as it looks when the water-lilies are in bloom."

"Aunt Helen is right, Paul," said Grandma; "you surely are a born poet. The words and air are both beautiful, and I agree with you that it is the prettier of the two songs."

"Now that is an occupation and talent I am proud of," said Aunt Helen. "To have such pretty thoughts, and to be able to express them in verse, suits you much better, Paul, than roaming through the slums of a large city after beggars, and I am sure you will be a greater success as a poet than a philanthropist any day."

"A what?" exclaimed Paul, not knowing the meaning of that large word.

"Why, a phil—" but she did not finish the word, for with a bound and a loud exclamation, Paul was making for the door, having caught sight of Moll shrinking like a little frightened animal back of the curtains.

"Why, Moll, I did not know you were here," he said. "Come right in and take a chair. You are not strong enough to stand so long." He took her hand while he spoke, and led her into the room, and seated her on one of the handsomest chairs which the room contained. It was embroidered with flowers; she hesitated when she saw the beautiful embroidered flowers, thinking it was hardly possible they were meant to sit on. Then she placed herself cautiously as near the edge of the chair as possible, but that did not satisfy Paul. "Sit right up on the chair, Moll," he said. "You will be more comfortable. Lean against the back, and I will get a stool for your feet."

Grandma and Aunt Helen could not resist smiling as they watched this little scene; Aunt Helen was actually

even rude enough to laugh outright when Paul brought the stool and placed Moll's feet upon it with his own hands.

"Now you will be all right," he continued, "and I will sing again for you if you like to hear the songs."

Moll only nodded her head, as she did in answer to all his questions. She was awed by all the grandeur that surrounded her, and yet she felt perfectly safe now that she was in the presence of her little rescuer. She longed to be always near him, that she might watch him and hear him talk. She had tried several times to speak, but it seemed to her impossible to make a sound, and the words seemed to stick in her throat like a large lump, filling it up and making it impossible to utter a syllable.

"Are you not too tired to stay up any longer?" Grandma asked her.

Again she only nodded in reply.

"I think she is rested some, mum," spoke Jane from the hall. "She has had several naps in the chair, and was afther walken up here by herself to hear Masther Paul sing."

"If you think she had better go right to bed, Grandma, I will sing for her some other time," said Paul. "Because I want her to be strong enough to-morrow to go to the Home."

"Well, I do not think it will do her any harm to listen to a song or two. She must enjoy singing, to find her way up here when she heard your voice."

"Sing the lily song again," said Aunt Helen. "I would like to hear it, and I know Moll would too," she continued, turning and smiling at the frightened child for the first time. In spite of all she had said, she was

beginning to be somewhat interested in her. Paul stepped over to the piano, and again his sweet voice filled the room. Moll sat as one entranced, her thin fingers clutching at her dress nervously, her mouth open, and her eyes fixed on the little singer.

As soon as the song was finished, Paul stepped over to her and said, "Do you like that song? If you could see Beechwood Creek, you would like it better. Beechwood is the place where I live, you know. Don't you think it a pretty name? A beautiful creek runs right through our place; large trees grow all along its banks and meet overhead in places. All kinds of wild flowers grow there, daisies everywhere, wild roses, violets, and mosses and ferns of all kinds. Some of the rocks are just covered with lichens and moss. I know you would think Beechwood was beautiful if you could see it. Perhaps sometime I can drive over to the Home for you, when you get strong, for it is only a few miles from Beechwood. Don't you think I could, Grandma?" he asked, turning toward her.

"I do not know of any reason to prevent you," she replied.

"Would you like to see Beechwood?" he asked Moll.

She nodded her head in reply. It all sounded very beautiful. She could not, however, in her imagination picture just what such a place could be like. She only stared and listened. He would take her there if she was willing to go; she understood that much fully. It might be something like the beautiful place she was in now, with water, trees, and beautiful flowers added. She would go, yes, anywhere with him.

Again Paul and his grandma bade her good-night,

and without a word she went with Jane, who took her by the hand and led her off to the most comfortable bed she had ever slept upon.

The next day Paul's delight knew no bounds, when he found himself accompanied by Moll and his grandma, actually rolling away in the train toward Glenwood Home. Moll had spent a good night and improved wonderfully. She was still, however, very quiet. It seemed impossible even to get her to speak a word.

This was her first experience on a train, and the sensation was a delightful one to her; and when they left the city behind them and sped along through green fields and woods, over bridges, and caught glimpses of lovely suburban residences, with their velvet lawns dotted with flower-beds, with happy children frolicking over them, it made her feel as though she were being transformed into another being, and entering a world entirely new and strange. It was the one her little rescuer lived in, she was sure, for everything was so like him, so sweet, so bright and wonderful, she was enchanted, as she sat gazing out of the window while one scene after another followed in rapid succession before her astonished eyes.

The Home physician examined her very carefully when they arrived there, and stated, as Grandma Wesley had said, that she was simply half starved, and weak for want of proper nourishment.

She still appeared to be dazed by her new surroundings and never uttered a word, though her changed expression told them how pleased and grateful she was.

"I will come to see you in a few days," said Paul, as he bade her good-by. "You will be very happy

here, and soon will get strong and well, and when the water-lilies are in bloom, I will drive over for you, and row you down the Beechwood Creek, so that you can see them."

Then with a good-by to the matron, his grandma and he left Moll in new hands.

CHAPTER V

IT was no wonder that there were tears in Paul's eyes, even though he was a boy nearly nine years of age, neither was it any wonder that his little heart was beating so fast that he pressed his hand against it to still its wild throbbings, for he had just heard some dreadful news.

Paul was sitting in one of the summer-houses in the Beechwood grounds and had just been reading a very interesting book; but it had fallen from his hands to the floor when he overheard Aleck, the coachman, bring this dreadful news to Pat, the gardener, who was working in a flower-bed close by.

They did not know of the occupant of the summer-house, for Paul was entirely screened from view by the thick vines that covered it, and the door faced an opposite direction.

"Have yez heard the news, Uncle Pat?" exclaimed Aleck as he approached.

"No, Oi hev dishcovered no news phwat wud make me luk like I'de taken lave of me sinses, fer shure; an' Aleck, yez do luk this minit as if dere wus not a grain left in yer head," and Pat leaned on his spade and laughed in his jovial way at Aleck's woful expression.

"Mebby yez won't be afther laffin when yez hears it, Uncle Pat," said Aleck, shaking his head seriously, hesitating to come out right with the news, knowing

well what a blow it was going to be to his old uncle.

"Mebby not, and mebbby so," said Pat, raising his brows and staring at Aleck with an amused expression. "But out wid it, me bye, out wid it!" he continued. "Yez knows it's always a mountain out av a mole-hill yez be afther makin', and a crossin' av the bridge afore yez come to it. Now tell me quick, phwat's yer truble this toime?"

Aleck was always full of trouble and always made a great fuss over a very small matter. He invariably came to his Uncle Pat to help him smooth things out; for he, on the other hand, was jolly and good-natured, happy in the one thought that he had a good home, a good boss, and plenty to eat, "and phwat more could a poor man be afther asken?" he had frequently said.

"Oi'm tellin' yez the honist truth, Uncle Pat, indade, am Oi," continued Aleck, still beating around the bush, trying to break the news as gradually and gently as possible. "Moind Oi'm in arnest, and it's not a foolin' yez am Oi this toime."

"Thin out wid it! out wid it, Oi say, and don't be afther sthandin' there loike a sinseless idiot!" and Pat brought down his spade with great force on the ground, to make his words more emphatic.

"Well, thin, if yez will hev it, Uncle Pat, Oi'll be afther tellin' yez thot — thot, tek it aisy now, — the boss is afther failin', and Beechwood will be sold."

"Och! be off wid yez, Aleck, me bye, wid the tellin' av sich a tale as thot. Oi can niver belave the loikes av it; where did yez iver hear it?" said Pat, leaning on his spade and laughing at the very idea of such an impossible thing. "Why, Aleck, me bye, the boss is

the richest mon fer miles aboot, and yez know his father and grandfather owned the place afore him, and how could they take it away from him? Oi must have thruer ividence then yez word afore Oi can belave it."

"'Pon me word, Uncle Pat, Oi 'm afther tellin' yez none but the honist truth; whoy, the farmer read it wid his own eyes in the marnin' paper, aboot a panic and some mon falin' to pay the boss phwat was owin' him."

Pat now leaned quite heavily on his spade, and the smile disappeared from his face, and his knees began to tremble. If it was in the papers, that was enough evidence for him. As Aleck had predicted, the news almost took his breath, and for a moment he could not speak; then he shook his head sorrowfully and said, "Indade, and is thot so. If the paper tells it, thin shure an' Oi must be afther belavin' it. But moighty sorry am Oi for the boss and the rist. There niver was a thruer gintlemon, and it's owin' to no fault av his, whatever it moight be." Then, for the first time in his life, Aleck saw his old uncle wipe a tear from his eye with his red handkerchief. "It's not young am Oi any more, to be sure, Aleck, me bye," he went on, "and who will tek an' ould mon loike meself to worak fer him."

Just then Aleck was called and was obliged to leave old Pat alone with his sorrowful thoughts. He sat down on the grass when Aleck turned away, to think it all over, and at the same time little Paul in the summer-house was thinking it over too, or trying to, for the conversation he had just overheard seemed to have turned his brain; he could not collect his thoughts and bring himself to realize that what he had just heard

was really true. Every word seemed to pierce his heart like so many arrows; he was stunned, and fairly gasped for breath. "Beechwood will be sold! Beechwood will be sold!" Those dreadful words kept ringing in his ears and sent sharp shooting pains through his head. For a minute everything looked blurred before his eyes; then he closed them, pressed his head with his two hands, when suddenly the nerves relaxed, and his eyes began to fill with tears. He peeped through the lattice-work and leaves, and saw plainly the top of Pat's old straw hat, and knew he was sitting down, too overcome by the news to continue his work.

"Poor old Pat!" he thought, "he loves it as well as I do. I will go to him, for I must go to some one;" and as though glad he was so near to sympathize with him in this awful moment, he arose and ran out of the summer-house.

Pat scarcely realized his presence before he felt two arms around his neck and a head pressed on his shoulder, and heard great sobs, which now could not be controlled.

Pat just pressed him to his heart for a moment; neither spoke a word; then Paul said, between sobs, "Oh, Pat, dear old Pat, tell me it is not so."

"Me bye! me bye!" was all Pat could say just then, for he was almost choking himself with his efforts to keep back the tears.

"We can-not — gi-give — it — up — can — we — we — love — it so much — don't — we — dear — old — Pat?"

"Oh, me bye! me bye!" Pat repeated again, holding him tighter and rocking his body to and fro. Then he took out his old handkerchief and wiped the

tears from Paul's face, then one or two that had found their way on his own cheek, making a great effort to control himself, that he might say something to comfort Paul.

"Niver moind, niver moind, me little mon," he finally said. "Don't be a graven av yerself so hard, fer it 's sick yez will be; thin yez poor father will be afther having more trubles. Dere, dere, me bye, be a brave little mon thot yez allus wus, and mebbe it is not so bad as the loikes of the sthory Aleck be afther tellin'."

The tears were a great relief to Paul, although he did feel ashamed of them, for he rarely cried, and never as he did now on Pat's shoulder; but Pat would never tell, he was sure of that, and Pat knew him, and that he was no baby.

"The pain here is not so bad now, Pat," he said, raising his head and placing his hand on his heart.

"Oi 'm moighty glad av it, me darlint, moighty glad indade. Oi know it will be afther doin' yez good. Oi 'm sorry that mebbe yez will be afther lavin' yer iligant hame. Oi knows how yez love it, — ivery flower, ivery tree, and ivery blade av grass. But thin yez are young, me bye, wid a long life afore yez, while poor ould Pat is near the ind av his journey."

Those sad words made Paul forget his own sorrow for the time, for what did they mean but that Pat did not expect to live much longer, and that his journey on earth was nearly over. His little heart went out now in fullest sympathy for poor old Pat, for, after all, he thought, "it must be worse for him."

"Don't talk that way, please don't, dear Pat," he said, drawing his head down close to his own, while

he still lay in his arms. "Why, you might live to be a hundred, and I will take care of you even if father has failed. Maybe you can go with us, anyhow," and Paul patted his head affectionately.

"Me bye! me blessed bye! Yez heart is as tinder as an angel's, and Pat O'Reily will niver forgit yez kindness to him; but yez father could niver be bothered wid the loikes av me if it's lost his money he has. Oi wud only be a sthumblin'-block in his way. Thru, he wus allus afther sayin' he wud look afther me all moi life, but he niver knew av this when he shpake."

"I mean to ask him, anyhow, Pat, and if he really can't keep you, I know he can find some one who will; and just as soon as I get old enough to work, you can live with me, so do not be sad any more, will you?"

"Oi 'll try to plaze yez, me darlint, if yez will kape a brave heart yerself. Yez know Oi cum to Beechwood win yez grandfather was here, long afore yez own father was born. Oi niver thot Oi wud be afther lavin' it, me bye, and thot me troubles wud kem whin Oi wus ould an' gray."

"Everybody has to have troubles, though," said Paul. "Dr. Andrews said so, and that we are always better when we have had them; but I guess nobody has ever had such an awful one as this, do you think so, Pat?"

"Oi knows some have even worse troubles thin this, me bye. Oi guess thim words av the minister's are thrue, and ungrateful to the Lord am Oi to hev forgit all His goodness to Pat O'Reily, fer the crosses He sint me wus allus light; an' shure it's a hard heart Oi hev to be afther fergitin' av His goodness all me life."

"That is so, Pat; we never see His goodness when dreadful troubles come, do we? And yet we ought to. We only seem to see the trouble."

"Yer right, me bye, yer right. Thim words are thrue; we ought to, and Oi'll try to see only the goodness av the Lord's, and shure yez will too, won't yez, me darlint?"

"Yes; I'm going to try with all my might, Pat. I feel better now, and I am going down to the creek to bathe my eyes, for I would not want Mother to see I had been crying, for anything. I want to be very brave when I talk about it to her."

"Bless her! and be shure yez do, fer the blow will go hard wid the dear lady, Oi'm afther thinkin'."

"Yes, I know it will; and that is the reason I must never cry again, no matter how I feel, and never let her know of that awful pain here, when I think of leaving Beechwood, for that would make her feel worse. I want to try to get used to it before we talk about it together."

"Indade, it would make her feel worse if she knew av the pain; and Oi'm shure yez are goin' to be a little soldier in the mather, an Oi will try to be a big wan from this minit on."

"And then it will be just like two soldiers fighting in a great battle, won't it?" said Paul, while he laughed through the tears, and so did Pat.

"Indade it will, me bye, a great battle indade;" but Pat shook his head nevertheless, as though in doubt of himself, at least, being equal to the fight. "Oi must be afther workin' now, me bye, fer this patch must be finished afore night. Oi belave me soul Oi'm gettin' so ould and sthiff in the jints, when

once down, Oi can't git meself oop agin," said Pat, as with grunts and groans he tried to rise from the ground.

"Take hold of this," said Paul, handing him the spade, then taking his arm. "I get that way myself sometimes when I sit for a long time in one place. It is n't because you are old, Pat; people often get stiff in their joints when they are even children."

"Mebby so, mebbly so," said Pat, as he finally stood up and stretched out his old bent body.

Paul always had a horror of thinking any one was old, just because a bent back, white hair, and a tottering step always appealed so intensely to his sympathies, and made him think they must be suffering.

"You must not feel too sad to sing now, while you are at work, Pat. You know you always do; and if I did n't hear you any more, I would know you had stopped being a soldier, and that would make me feel badly. I like to hear your old Tu ra tum tay song. If you sang anything else, it would seem so queer, and would not suit you."

"It's hard to sing whin wan's heart is heavy, me bye; but Oi 'll be afther doin' me best to kape up a brave heart wid yerself." And there and then he commenced to sing the only song he ever sung, if you could call it such, as he resumed shovelling the soil in the flower-bed; while Paul walked off toward the creek.

"Tu ra tum tay, tu ray tum tay, tu ra tum tay, tum tee, Oh, roly ra laly ro la lum, Oh, roly ra laly lum lay."

He peeped out from under the rim of his old straw hat occasionally, to watch the little figure until he was out of sight, and he knew beyond hearing; then he ceased singing, for his heart was too heavy to continue.

"The partin' wid thot child will be the worst av it all, Oi belave," he thought. "And a brave little mon he is, to be shure, whin he tried to cheer poor me, and to kape oop fer his mother, wid his own heart ready to break. An awful day this fer the boss and meself, and all the rist; and shure it's hard to think av the indin' av it all."

Paul made straight for the creek, and, dipping his handkerchief in its cool waters, he tried to wipe away all traces of tears. It was so sudden, so strange, this dreadful news; he was afraid he could never get used to it sufficiently to talk to any one about it without giving way, as he did on Pat's shoulder. He had often imagined a great many things, for he was an imaginative child, but never in his whole life had he imagined such a thing as this coming to pass; for what child would ever think of being forced to leave a home that had not only been his father's, but his grandfather's, and even his great-grandfather's. Even yet he thought there must be some mistake. How well he knew the whole history of dear old Beechwood. How his great-grandfather bought the grounds in the first place, then built the house, and improved and added to it every year. How he planted all the trees up the wide drive that now were tall and stately, their branches spreading out until they met, all the way from the lodge to the house, making one long, winding, bower-like drive. The money he had spent hewing down dead trees and clearing out brushwood until it came down to his grandfather's care, who took the same pride in it his father had, continuing improvements, until it seemed that there was nothing left that could be done to add to its beauty. In Paul's time it was considered the

handsomest house, and the grounds the most beautiful, of any private residence in that part of the country.

What had been in his grandfather's time a rough, narrow, wild road along the front of the place, with not a house in sight for more than a mile, was now a beautiful broad drive, called Linden Road, with handsome residences all along for miles. In his grandfather's time it took over an hour to get to the city, but now only a half-hour. New railroads had been built, and fast trains were run often, increasing the value of the property, so that now the Beechwood grounds were worth a small fortune.

All these things Paul had often heard, and his pride in Beechwood was as great as that of his forefathers.

On the left, the grounds were divided from those belonging to the Parsonage by a creek; that part was left in its natural beauty, for no human skill could there improve what nature had done. So was it any wonder that little Paul thought there must be some mistake, after all, as he sat on a stone by the creek with his hands clasped and his eyes blinking rapidly? He thought over all that Aleck had said, and tried to remember the exact words. "Perhaps, after all, I did not hear right; but yes, I did too," he finally concluded, "for Pat heard the same, and Aleck said it was in the papers, so it must be true, it must be true," he murmured, and he gazed about him wistfully at all the familiar spots he loved so well. Pat was right: he did love every blade of grass that grew in the Beechwood grounds.

"Dear old Beechwood! I can't give you up, indeed, I can't," he thought, while the tears started afresh;

but quick as a flash he brushed them away, and jumped up from the stone at the same time. "I will not cry," he thought, swallowing a big sob. "I forgot I must not think about it so much. I will try to think of something else, then I will slowly get used to it. I will go sit in the flower-garden for a while, for I love to be among the flowers when I am sad; they always make me feel better. I do wish I could go talk to Mother; but I can't now, I could never show her how brave I could be. I know I would cry; but when I get used to it, then I can talk to her and never cry a tear." And so he thought, this little philosopher, as he slowly walked over the lawns and through shady walks until he came to the flower-garden, where he sat down on a rustic bench to try to get used to the dreadful news that was almost breaking his heart.

He had been seated only a few moments, when he heard the voice of his little sister Grace calling him, "Bruver Paul, Bruver Paul, where are you?"

He answered with the old familiar whistle Grace knew so well, and in less than a minute she was by his side on the bench. "I toodent find you any pace," she said, panting; "I was yunning all ayound and ayound."

"Were you, Robin?"

"'Es, I was, and I 'm awsul tired now."

"You will soon get rested if you sit here for a while; for I think this is a very restful place," said Paul, in his old-fashioned way, speaking very seriously, and drawing a long sigh.

He always called Grace Robin from the day she was born. He remembered when he first saw her, — such a wee, plump little thing, with soft brown ringlets

over her head, and big brown eyes, which looked right into his as the nurse held her for his inspection. "Why, she looks just like a little robin," he said, after a long gaze. "Her cheeks are so soft and smooth, just like the breast of a robin;" and while he spoke, he smoothed softly the wee cheeks. "And this," he continued, touching the little brown ringlets, "is like the robin's back, brown and feathery."

The nurse was not able to stretch her imagination so as to be able to see any resemblance between the two, but she smiled at the little earnest face, and said, "Do you think so?"

Several times that day he went to the door to ask how little Robin was; and when she was old enough to join the family circle in the library, she was still little Robin to Paul, and had been ever since.

These two were great chums and understood one another perfectly, though baby Grace was but three years of age. They were better companions than Paul and Roy, who was a younger brother, just past seven.

There was a bond of sympathy between Paul and Grace that did not exist between the two boys.

Grace loved to hear the little verses Paul wrote about the flowers, trees, bees, and birds. Many of them she knew by heart. All that Paul said or did was absolutely right in her estimation, and she looked up to him as to her guardian angel.

"I fink you look tired too, Bruver Paul," she said, noting immediately his serious face and tone of voice.

Paul smiled, but said nothing. An idea was coming into his head. Why not tell Grace about the news? It would save his mother the trouble, and perhaps help him to get used to it if he practised talking to her;

and he could help Grace get used to it, so that when she heard it from her mother she could be brave too, and not shed a tear.

Baby Grace soon saw he was not in any humor for talking; she knew what that far-away, dreamy expression meant, — “that Bruver Paul was busy wiv a dreat big thought, and did n’t want to be disturved [disturbed].”

That was what she always said when she saw him in one of those thinking moods, and she would not bother him with questions at such times; for he did not like it, and that fact was sufficient reason for her to keep quiet.

With a little sigh she leaned back and slipped her hand quietly in his, watching his face closely for the first indication that would tell her he was returning from dreamland. The scene would have been a beautiful subject for an artist. The children were hand in hand, seated on the rustic seat among the flowers, with Nero, the large Newfoundland dog, at their feet.

Paul was dressed in a white blouse, with deep collar and cuffs of embroidery, brown velvet knickerbockers, and black stockings and pumps. His hair hung in loose curls, light and fluffy, with just a tinge of gold. His skin was clear and white, with a flush now in his cheeks, caused by the emotions of the past hour.

He was gazing dreamily away over the flowers and through the trees, apparently unconscious at the moment of Grace’s presence; while she, in her dainty thin white dress, with pale blue ribbons, short white stockings, black slippers, and brown curls, just the hue of the chestnut, encircling her sweet baby face, had a very wistful expression in her great dark eyes.

Yes, he thought it would certainly be a good plan, and with his mind satisfied on that point, he turned his head at last and looked in Grace's face questioningly, wondering if she would feel very sad about it, because he would not want her to feel just as he had felt when he first heard the dreadful news. He finally concluded it would be impossible for her to feel just exactly as he did, for she was so much younger.

Grace's face lit up with a smile when he turned, and she asked, "Was that a dreat big sad one, Bruver Paul?" edging up quite close to him, while he affectionately placed his arm around her.

"Yes, Robin, the saddest I have had in all my life," and Paul sighed and hesitated to begin.

Her smile changed into a serious expression at Paul's tone and words.

She waited a minute, still he did not speak; then she said, "Won't you tell me? 'tause I 'se 'like to hear all Bruver Paul's dreat big sad thoughts."

"I know you do, Robin, but this is such a dreadful one. I think it must be one of those big black clouds coming in my life that Dr. Andrews spoke about in his sermon one Sunday. Everybody must meet one or more of these dark clouds sometime in their lives; they may be very small, he said, so that we would not mind them much, and then again they may be so large and dark that it is all black everywhere we look, and we can't see even a ray of light, no matter which way we turn."

"Ten a dreat big cloud be 'like a dreat big sad thought?" asked Grace, with wide-open eyes.

"Yes, Robin, it can. I have been thinking all about it, and now I know this is just what Dr.

Andrews meant ; for it seems like a big dark cloud all around me, and I am in darkness."

How very dreadful all this sounded to baby Grace; she looked all about her, but saw no signs of darkness. She was beginning to understand her brother's way of talking, and knew there were often deeper and different meanings to many things he said than she was at first able to see, so she knit her brows and wondered just how a big black cloud could be like a "dreat" big sad thought.

"If you will promise not to say anything about it, and that you will try not to feel very sad, I will tell you," said Paul.

"'Es, I will promise."

"Well, then, come close and listen. I will whisper so that no one will hear. How would you like to leave Beechwood and never come back to it again?"

"To leave Beechwood and never tum back adain? and toodent I see dear murver and farver, or Roy, or my bruver Paul adain eider?" and Grace threw her arms around his neck as she spoke, thinking his thought was indeed more dreadful than anything she ever imagined.

"Oh, no, I do not mean to leave all of us, Robin," he said encouragingly. "I mean, suppose we all had to move away from Beechwood to a little bit of a home, maybe a great way off."

"Wood air be any birds and fowers ever so far away?"

"Oh, yes, of course there are always flowers in the country, you know, and trees and birds; and it will be in the country, because Father always said he would never bring up little children in a big dusty city."

"Well, 'en, 'at would be a dreat big sad thought in my head 'ike yours, bruver Paul, if I toodent see Beechwood never adain," and tears filled her eyes, while she still clung to Paul, looking up in his face through them, as though searching for a ray of light to solve this great mystery.

Paul came very near crying too when he saw the tears, but with a great effort he managed to control himself, while he tried to comfort her.

"You can cry a little bit, Robin," he said, holding her tightly against him and patting her, as Pat had done to him shortly before. "It makes people feel better to cry when they have great trouble."

"'En I fink you ought to cry jes' a little bit too, Bruver Paul."

"Oh, no, I guess I had better not now," he said, quite bravely. "Maybe some time I will," and he wiped the tears from Grace's face as he spoke, swallowing a lump that seemed very hard to get rid of.

"You see that is what I mean by a big cloud in my life, Robin. Did n't it make you feel as if everything was black when you first heard it?"

"'Es, it did;" and now the meaning of Paul's comparison suddenly dawned upon her, and she smiled through the tears, her face brightening up with the pleasing thought of being able to comprehend the full meaning of the little sermon.

"Oh, 'es, now I unnerstan', Bruver Paul," she said. "To doe away from Beechwood is des 'ike it was all black, 'tause we are so worried and sorry to leave it, is n't it?"

"Yes, that is it. We are just so worried we can't think of anything else; but we must, Robin, must n't

we? Because — because there is light somewhere if we will only look for it. Dr. Andrews said so; and no matter how dark the clouds are, if we try to hunt for the light, we can always find it, and get out of the darkness.”

“I will doe wiv you, if you will take me out, Bruver Paul.”

“Of course you will, and I am going to get out of this as quick as I can; because, Robin,” and here he lowered his voice (for he had forgotten to keep it low), “we both must be brave when we talk to Mother about it, and we must not cry a single tear, and then that will be something to make her glad, even if she would be sad about leaving Beechwood.”

“’Es, it would,” said Grace, who had now ceased crying and was much interested in all Paul was saying.

“But remember, Robin, don’t say anything about it first to Mother. We are getting stronger all the time, you know, but I don’t think we are quite strong enough yet to talk about it to her.”

“’Es, I will ’member. I will jes teep as still as a mouse about it.”

“No matter where we go, Robin, we will have a good time; and even if there is only a little patch of ground, I can make a garden out of it. I will plant it full of flowers, and you can help me take care of them, for you see we won’t have Pat or Thomas any more if Beechwood is sold.”

“Why tan’t we have Thomas or Pat any more?” she asked, perplexed.

“Because, don’t you see, Father has failed, and lost lots and lots of money, and has n’t enough left to pay them. A big money panic made him fail, Aleck said,

and some merchants owed him money too and could not pay him, so he has to sell Beechwood to get some."

"Don't you fink 'ey must be awsul bad men to do 'at to our farver?"

"I don't think they could help it on account of the panic, Robin."

"What tan a panic be 'ike, Bruver Paul?"

At this question Paul drew a long breath. How could he explain, if he did not know himself? but it would never do to acknowledge his ignorance to Grace, so he tried to make some attempt at an explanation. "A panic," he began slowly, "is a dreadful thing; everything gets panicky, you know, gets all in a muss, kinder topsy-turvy, and" — A loud shout rent the air not far off, and Paul stopped short, very glad to be interrupted at a point where he felt he could go no further.

CHAPTER VI

“**H**URRAH! Hurrah!” shouts a young boyish voice; then “r-r-r-rum a tum tum, r-r-r-rum a tum tum, r-r-rum a tum tum.”

Nero, who had been lying quietly on the grass, now and then lifting up his head for a kind word or stroke from the two occupants on the bench during this very serious conversation, now jumped up and bounded away in the direction of the drum, while Paul and Grace sat quietly waiting the appearance of the little drummer. Now they hear, “Shoulder arms! ’Bout face! Forward, march!” Nearer and nearer he comes, and in less than a minute Roy emerged from the trees and bushes, with Nero bounding at his heels.

Paul and Grace were both shocked at the spectacle he presented, for it had not been very long before that he had been dressed neatly for the afternoon; but they had not an opportunity to express their surprise in words, for Roy bounded before them in a great state of excitement, waving his hat when he saw them, and yelling at the top of his voice, “Hoorah for the Knights of Pityus [Pythias]! Hurrah for the Knights of Pityus!” Then he gasped, “Oh, Perseffer, do you know that I’m going to be a knight when I’m a man?” He always called Paul Perseffer, meaning professor, ever since the time Paul was obliged to wear glasses when reading, on account of a muscular

weakness. It was a funny sight indeed to Roy to see Paul in spectacles, and when his father laughingly called him professor, that capped the climax, and Roy burst forth in one of his merry peals of laughter, and from that moment always called him Perseffer, and sometimes Persef for short.

It was not surprising that he did not pronounce the word correctly, for he never got anything right, and caused a great deal of amusement constantly by his mispronunciations and the jumbled-up manner in which he would describe things.

"Oh! I've had the jolliest picnic a feller ever had," he continued, throwing himself down on the grass before them. "I've been down in the field where the Knights of Pityus are camping. The captain said they would be there a whole week. He is a fine man, Persef; he taught me how to drill and salute, and said I would make a first-class captain. You ought to see them drill; it is fine, I tell you. They walk just as straight as sticks, and they all step out just erzackly at the same second; the drums beat, and this is how they go;" and forgetting how tired he was, he jumped up again, and marched up and down before the audience on the bench, Nero making way for him and standing up close to Grace's side by the rustic seat.

Back and forth, straight as a major-general, "Forward, march! Halt! Shoulder arms!"

His face was flushed and wet with perspiration, covered with black streaks where with his soiled hands he had wiped off the beads as they gathered on his forehead and ran down his cheeks. His light curls were blown about his head and face in wildest disorder. His white duck sailor suit was covered with

dust and stains. One stocking hung over his shoe, displaying a long scratch, from which little drops of blood oozed, and, mixed with dirt, ran down his leg.

Baby Grace was very much concerned about this, and as soon as Roy stopped to take breath, she said, "Won't you doe up to Murver and tell her to put a claster [plaster] on your sore? Did you do it while you were marching wiv er soldiers?"

"No-o-o," drawled Roy, looking down at the scratch with utter indifference, "I cut that on a stone in the road when I was running home. That's nothing; Knights of Pityus don't mind a little thing like that. Why, sometimes they have their legs taken right off and don't mind it much; they get used to it, — brave ones do; and if I go to war and have mine shot off, I will have a nice wooden one made, then everybody will say as I go limping along, 'There goes a brave man; he gave his leg for his country.'"

"I did not know there was anybody camping near Beechwood," said Paul.

"I know you did n't, because they just came. I was helping them put up their tents. The captain said I could come down and see them whenever I wanted to; he gave me a sandbridge [sandwich] before I came away and told me I had better run home and come back to-night, 'cause he had some very importment [important] business to attend to. Oh, won't it be fun to see them drill to-night! You can go, Perseffer, and you too, Grace. My! but I'm glad I am alive to-day."

Just then Mrs. Arlington made her appearance. "Why, my dear boy," she exclaimed, "what have you been doing with yourself to get soiled in that man-

ner?" for she was shocked at the sight Roy presented, as Paul and Grace had been.

Roy looked down on his soiled clothes, rather ashamed of his appearance and of giving his mother so much trouble; for it seemed a hopeless task to teach him to keep himself clean even for a short time.

"I'm awful sorry, Mother, but indeed I could n't help it this time."

"That is your excuse every time," said his mother, seating herself between Paul and Grace on the garden-bench. "You are so heedless and never stop to think. You rush pell-mell into everything, no matter whether you are dressed in a condition for it or not. I saw you running over the fields and climbing fences with your drum from my window, and thought you had rushed off to see the Knights of Pythias setting up their tents in the field beyond. How did you know they were there?"

"I'll tell you just how it all was, Mother," said Roy, straightening himself up before her in readiness for a long explanation, while his mother tried her best to keep a straight face, which was a very difficult thing to do, so comical did he look, with his face full of smears, a paper soldier-hat the captain had made him stuck on one side of his head with a chicken feather bobbing out the top.

"I was standing down by the barn," he went on, "and I heard a drum. I climbed a tree and saw a lot of soldiers down in the field; then I ran to the house for my drum, and then climbed over the fences to get there soon. I stood right by the banders when I got there, and the music was fine. I think the noise would put the Perseffer in the Insamasilun [Insane

Asylum] if he was there; but I love it, and stood right near the horners. The captain was a jolly man; he carried me around on his shoulder, and gave me 'freshments to eat. I did n't know I was going to get my clothes soiled, but it was awful hot out in the sun, and I got full of purspration [perspiration]; then I fell down on a stone in the road and cut my leg, but it was only a voidable axdent [unavoidable accident], indeed it was, Mother. Oh! I forgot to tell you, Persef" (he continued, without stopping), "about the funny old dog the captain has, that shakes hands with his hind paw. You just say, 'Gyp, shake hands,' and he puts his paw right in your hand just as polite as a human being. Oh, my, but I had fun! and I'm going down to-night, Mother, to see them drill; the captain gave me an imitation [invitation]."

"I am afraid I shall be obliged to deprive you of that pleasure, Roy," said his mother. "You have been very thoughtless and careless after being dressed for the afternoon. You know I do not care what you do when you have on your romping clothes; but when you are dressed for the afternoon, I do like to see you keep yourself clean enough, at least, to be presentable when your father returns. Now your clothes will all have to be changed, and it is rather late in the day for another fresh outfit. What would your father say to see you come to the table in such a condition? and it is nearly time for him now."

"Oh, please don't say I can't go to the drill! I will go without any supper for a punishment; won't that do? And I will promise to try ever so hard to think about my clothes."

"'Es, he will be dood next time, Murver," pleaded Grace.

"Oh, yes, please let him go! You see it is just because he heard the music and forgot. I often get thinking about something myself and forget everything else but that one thing; just like the day when I found Moll and the organ-grinder, so do let him go this time." So spoke the little philosopher.

"Well, I shall have to think about it," said Mrs. Arlington. "But go right up to the house now, Roy," she continued, "and tell Hulda to wash and dress you."

Mrs. Arlington was only twenty-nine, and fair like Paul and Roy. Grace had the brown hair and eyes of her father. Paul watched his mother's face very closely to see if he could discover there any indication of the great sorrow that she must know about. Her face, however, showed no trace of it as far as he was able to see, and he thought how wonderful it was for her to be able to hide it so well, and be so bright and cheerful. Why could n't he do the same? He wondered when she would speak to him about it; perhaps now, any moment in fact, and he trembled every time she spoke, thinking it was coming, and he would not, very likely, be able to control himself.

"Have you been sitting here very long?" she asked, after Roy had left.

"About an hour," replied Paul.

"I found Bruver Paul here all by his own sef, finking one of his dreat big thoughts," said Grace, giving him a knowing look as she spoke; but Paul quickly responded with a frown, and Grace understood that it meant she should not have said even that much, and to remember her promise about that conversation.

"Was it such a great big one this time?" asked his mother, laughing.

Oh, why had Grace said that? how was he to escape if she insisted on knowing what it was? and he felt the right time had not come yet, for him at least.

He hesitated a minute, not knowing what answer to make, while Mrs. Arlington looked down in his face, thinking that they both appeared unusually quiet and serious.

"Oh, yes, it was a pretty large one," he tried to say indifferently.

"You dear little philosopher, if you don't soon stop all these big thoughts, you will never live to be a man," she said, still smiling. "You must cease worrying about things you cannot understand; it tires your little brain and makes you nervous and thin."

"I do try to stop thinking, and to get strong like Roy; but sometimes things stick in my head, and I can't get them out until I think them out."

"Well, you must keep on trying, my boy. Romp and play just as much as you can, and if you find they won't leave you, come tell them to me, and I think I can soon make things clear."

"I always do tell you, Mother; I mean nearly always," remembering he had not gone to her with this last trouble. "Sometimes you don't happen to be near me; then I try to think it out myself."

Fortunately for Paul, she asked no further questions about this particular thought, but, changing the subject, said, "I see you have forgotten to cut the flowers to-day, and that I am sure is a much pleasanter occupation than sitting here thinking."

"I did forget them to-day," replied Paul. "I will go get the scissors, and we will cut them now." Grace held up her dress to catch the roses, while his mother

and he clipped them from the laden bushes and threw them into it.

Once Mrs. Arlington stepped over to an arbor to cut some clematis; then Paul whispered to Grace, "Be careful now, Robin, and don't say a word. Mother does not want to talk about it yet either, and I am not quite ready. Now you won't say a word, will you?"

"I will try awsul hard not to breve a sinle word," replied Grace, emphasizing every word, and looking as serious as a little judge.

In a few moments all three were busily engaged in arranging the flowers in vases for the different rooms and the table. That evening Paul did not have much to say at the table; he could not have found an opportunity if he had, for Roy monopolized the conversation, telling his father of all his experiences of the afternoon, and was just as excited over the Knights of Pythias as he was when he first returned from the field.

His father laughed again and again at his jolly remarks, though Paul thought he did occasionally look sad; in fact, he noticed for the first time that his face looked quite thin and haggard, and he wished he could be like Roy and say funny things to make him laugh.

While he was busily engaged with these thoughts, he was suddenly aroused by his mother, saying, "What do you see in the carafe, Paul, fairies? to spirit your thoughts away from us all, and your appetite?" for he had been gazing into the cut-glass bottle before him for five minutes with a far-off, dreamy look in his eyes.

"Oh! I was only thinking, that was all," he said carelessly, taking up his fork and beginning to eat, giving a suspicious glance toward his father.

"Well, suppose you stop thinking for a time, and tell me what you have been doing with yourself to-day," said his father. "Roy has given an account of himself, and now it is your turn, then Grace's."

"Oh, I have been doing lots of things," began Paul, fairly trembling inwardly as he tried to think of all that happened before he heard that dreadful news in the summer-house.

"I took a drive this morning with Roy and Grace; then we went down by the creek to hunt for insects, and —"

"Yes, and I killed them while the Perseffer hunted," interrupted Roy. "He hunts them every day for his klektion, and studies about them in his insect book; but he is afraid to kill them, and you know somebody has to do it, for he could n't put them in his klektion alive. I just give them a whack, and they wiggle a minute, then die."

"No, I am not afraid," spoke up Paul; "I only don't like to think of a little insect suffering, even if it is only a fly. I told Roy to wait until we got the chloroform, you know, you gave me to kill them with; but when I went off to hunt, he would take them out of the box and kill them."

"Roy sed he better not wait for er coalafone, 'tause some of 'em 'at had wings might fly away, and some 'at had feet might yun away," said baby Grace.

"And could my little pet look at them being killed?" asked Mr. Arlington.

"I toodent hardly," replied baby Grace, "but Roy say 'at 'ey don't know anyfing when 'ey get a knock."

"Perhaps they do not know very much after one of Roy's knocks," said Mr. Arlington. "But I am

grieved that he would take pleasure in destroying life or giving pain to the smallest insect."

This remark made Roy feel ashamed of himself.

"I thought a knock would kill them as quick as chloform," he said.

"It may kill them as quick, but it is barbarous to destroy them in the way you often do, Roy. When they inhale chloroform they suffer no pain, and it is just like going off quietly to sleep; besides, when you smash them you spoil them for a collection, and I know that Paul would not just for the sport kill any insect or watch its dying struggles."

"No, I would n't," said Paul. "But then Roy did not think they suffered, or he would not kill them the way he does."

"No, he didn't think: there is just where the trouble is; he never does think, and you think all the time," said Mrs. Arlington, laughing. "Now if you could only loan Roy your thinking cap, and you go without occasionally, the exchange would be very beneficial to you both."

"You are right, little mother. I wish it were possible for such an exchange to take place," said Mr. Arlington. "I thought that you had ceased worrying your little brain about subjects that were too deep for you?" he continued, addressing Paul.

"I don't think about the deep ones," said Paul; "but you know there are some not very deep, but still you have to think them out."

"Well, only don't worry and be too serious; for you know, 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy,'" and Mr. Arlington laid his hand on Paul's head as he arose from the table. "You ought to be the

happiest boy in the whole world," he continued, "for surely you have had everything to make you so; and I want to see you light-hearted and strong, so that when the real sorrows come in life, you will at least be physically equal to them."

These last words were spoken very sad and low, it seemed to Paul. He sat quietly and never uttered a word as his father walked away.

He felt a strong inclination to run after him, and throw his arms around him, and tell him he was equal to sorrows even now; that he knew all about his business trouble and dear old Beechwood going to be sold, and that he was going to be very brave about it; but notwithstanding all these resolutions that awful lump would rise in his throat when he thought of speaking about it, and it required such an effort to keep it down, he could do or say nothing, but sit quite still, until he conquered it.

In a little while he was walking down the road with his father, mother, and Grace, toward the field where the Knights of Pythias were camping.

"I suppose Roy has run on ahead," said Mrs. Arlington. "I don't see a sign of him anywhere."

"I fink he went to hunt his drum," said Grace, "'tause he sed he toodent find it wherever he looked." Sure enough, that was just what had delayed him, and also hunting up an old discarded soldier outfit he knew had been thrown up in the garret.

He really meant to keep his word when he promised so solemnly in the afternoon to keep himself clean, but, as usual, it escaped his mind entirely; only one thought stayed in his head, — to deck himself like a real soldier and quickly join the Knights in the field.

He rummaged through everything for all the different pieces of the outfit, moving boxes and bundles out of the way with the strength of a young Hercules. Everything, of course, was more or less dusty, and by the time he had found the whole outfit, and put it on, his face, hands, and clothes were covered with dust.

R-r-r-r-rum-m-m a tum tum, r-r-rum-m-m-m a tum tum. Here he comes on a run, drumming all the time, and fearing his delay might cause him to miss the drill. His mother raised her eyes in astonishment when she saw him in the old tattered outfit, covered with dust. The cap was torn, and a piece of the gilt cord hung down over the side of his head. The army blue jacket was soiled, and worn to the lining in some places. The epaulettes were all out of shape, and the tarnished gilt fringe hung half off. A battered leather knapsack was strapped on his back, and an old leather belt was tied together with a piece of clothes-line, from which dangled at his side an old bent toy sword.

They all stopped and waited for him; but when he approached, he never halted, simply raised his hand to his hat, saluted as the captain had taught him, and passed right on, making for the camp as quickly as possible.

So amused was his father, he just stood still and laughed until the tears came to his eyes; in fact, they all laughed, even Mrs. Arlington; she could not help it, notwithstanding his broken promise. She said nothing about it, however, and made no effort to detain him.

A number of people had already gathered around the field from the neighboring residences, and all were more interested in little Roy Arlington than they were in the Knights, when they saw him coming in

his soldier rig, and were still more interested and amused, fairly shouting with laughter, when he stood near them during the drill and imitated them in every move they made, using his tin sword as they did theirs, coming in a few seconds behind, in all the moves of the drill.

It never occurred to him that he was the centre of attraction, and that all the laughing was at his expense.

After the drill he walked straight up to the captain, and said, "Don't you think I will make a good Knight of Pityus?"

The captain laughed as he looked down in the roguish face upturned to his, besmeared with dust, and the soiled and dilapidated outfit, and said, "Indeed, my little fellow, I do think you will make a first class Knight of *Pity us*," at which every one laughed who was near enough to hear.

"He looks like a soldier who has gone through the war and fought in the fiercest battle," said Mr. Arlington, while they all continued to laugh at him and watch his every movement.

Paul had been standing on a rail of a fence to get a good view of the drill, and baby Grace was perched high up on a post, supported by her father, and, like all the rest of the people, were more interested in Roy than the Knights. Paul forgot for the time all his troubles of the afternoon, and laughed and clapped his hands as enthusiastically as any one; and all wore smiling faces on their return home, with Roy in the lead, his shoulders thrown back, and keeping time with the beat of the drum as he marched proudly along, Nero stepping out majestically beside him as though very proud of his young master that day.

CHAPTER VII

IT was all too true ; there was no mistake about it whatever. Mr. Arlington had failed, and it was now the principal topic of conversation in Arlington Heights. The place was named after the Arlingtons, they being the first family that lived there, and in Paul's great-grandfather's time, the largest landholders. Great sympathy was expressed for Mr. Arlington on all sides, and many kind friends offered him all the assistance necessary to enable him to continue the business of manufacturing woollen goods which he had carried on extensively for some years. But the outlook in the business world generally was then very discouraging, and, being in poor health, he could not be persuaded to take upon his shoulders fresh responsibilities and risks. He had already a position offered him in the West by a friend he had once helped through some business difficulties, and he finally decided to accept this offer as soon as possible.

Yes, Beechwood must be sold, and perhaps never again would the Arlington children romp in the dear old grounds.

Mrs. Arlington never imagined what Paul's big thought was, the afternoon she found him and Grace on the bench in the flower-garden. It never occurred to her that he had already learned of the great sorrow that had befallen them. For weeks she had known of its coming, but had

postponed telling Paul as long as possible, knowing what a blow it would be to him. She could delay it no longer now, for the papers had published it, and he might very likely hear of it at any time. It was a sad duty, but she wanted to be the one first to acquaint him with their new plans.

"Will you sit with me a while this morning?" she called after him, as she saw him about to leave the house the day following their visit to the Knights of Pythias.

"Now it is coming," thought Paul, but he made a mighty effort to brace up and be in readiness. It must come some time, he thought, and he would be greatly relieved when it was over, after all.

"Yes, I will come with you, Mother," he said, turning back and following her up the stairs.

"I have a piece of sewing that must be finished to-day," she said, "and afterward you and I will take a drive over to Glenwood to see Moll."

"I would like that ever so much," he said, but he was thinking of something much more important just then.

Mrs. Arlington seated herself by an open window, while Paul stood by her and gazed out over the beautiful grounds of Beechwood in a dreamy way, and his mother wondered what had come over him, he was unusually quiet and thoughtful. And then for the first time she thought could it be possible he had heard! but, no, that could not be, she decided, for the first thing he would have done would have been to come to her.

"What are you thinking about?" she asked, keeping right on with her sewing.

"Oh, I was just thinking about Beechwood," he replied carelessly, still keeping his eyes on the beautiful scene that lay stretched out before him.

"It looks very beautiful this morning after the rain in the night, don't you think so, Mother? The grass is so green and fresh; and look at the creek how full it is. You can see the water dashing up against the stones through that space in the trees, and how it sparkles where the sun strikes it."

Mrs. Arlington lifted her eyes for a moment and followed the direction of Paul's gaze. "It is beautiful, Paul," she said. "I do not think that I ever saw it look more charming."

Just below were the green terraced lawns like velvet laid in folds; beyond to the right a grove of trees extended to the creek some distance off, and still farther beyond lay fields and woods, through which the winding road ran, lost here and there where the trees were very thick, then appearing again on the other side, over bridges, and past the toll-gate, with the little white cottage of the toll-keeper who lived there with his wife and son, and with whom Paul had many a pleasant chat, having known them all his life.

He clasped his hands and blinked his eyes, looking in all directions at every beautiful and familiar spot, all bringing up some little incident that had happened during his short life.

He could see the place where the carriage was upset about two years before, throwing them all out in a heap; he remembered well how his mother had lost consciousness for a time, and how frightened they all were to see her white face, thinking that she was killed.

He could see a part of the parsonage on the other side of the creek, most of it being hidden by trees. What a loved spot that was, for his great friend and tutor lived

there, Dr. Andrews, the minister of their church. He was away at present visiting distant relatives, and Paul wondered whether he could have heard the news or not, and thought how he should miss him if he had to move very far away from Beechwood.

Finally a rose-bush growing near one of the summer-houses attracted him.

"Do you think my favorite rose-bush could be transplanted without doing it any harm, Mother?" he asked.

Mrs. Arlington knew well which it was, and why he called it his favorite.

"I suppose it could, with care," she replied. "Why do you ask?"

"Because," continued Paul, then hesitated and glanced at his mother, whose eyes were bent over her sewing; then he said, "I was only thinking that if anything ever happened that I should have to go away from Beechwood, I should like to take it with me."

That remark was so strange and unusual that Mrs. Arlington looked up quickly, giving him one searching glance as it dawned upon her now that he must know, and without a doubt his quiet and serious manner since the day before had been due to this knowledge. She, however, did not let him see that she had discovered his secret, his big thought of the day before. She would listen first to all he had to say.

"Do you think so much of that rose-bush?" she asked, speaking very low and keeping her eyes down close over her sewing.

"Indeed I do; I would not part with it for anything. You know why, Mother. How I used to lie on the grass beside it when you were so ill with fever that summer, and look up at your window when they would n't

allow me in the room, and every time a flower or bud came out, I picked it and went up softly to your door, and told them to give it to you from me. I used to think if you saw one of those roses you loved so much, that perhaps it might make you well. I was such a little fellow then, you know, only five. Then that day when Dr. Harrison found me there crying; I will never forget it, because you were very sick then, and I thought you would die, and the pretty roses would not make you well, after all. And while I was crying, Dr. Harrison picked me right up in his arms and said, 'Come, wipe your tears away, and do not cry any more, for your mother will soon be well now.'

"I was so glad I did not know what to do. I said, 'I think it was the pretty roses, after all, Doctor.' I looked at the bush and found just two beautiful buds on it, and I picked them and took them up to your room, and they said I could come in and give them to you myself. You smiled when you saw me, and reached out your hand for them. They said you were too weak to talk, but I knew you were glad I brought them, and they lifted me up and I kissed you. Don't you remember all about it, Mother?"

"Yes, I remember it all very plainly," said Mrs. Arlington, bending her head down still lower.

"Mother dear, do you know that I could close my eyes and see every tree and bush in the Beechwood grounds, even if I were thousands of miles away? See our cosey nook over there, where you read so many books to me while I lay in the hammock and you sat in the little red wicker chair close beside me. Was n't it strange how those trees formed such a pretty bower themselves without any training? If you will just lean

over a little, Mother, you can see the grape arbor. Don't you remember the day when Grace and I were swinging in the swing under it, and she slipped off? It frightens me yet whenever I think of it. I thought she was killed, and how glad I was when I found she was not hurt much. Swings are dangerous things for such wee little girls as Grace, I think. I never put her on again after that." So interested had Paul become describing these little incidents, that he talked straight ahead, never being aware that he had unconsciously revealed his great secret to his mother, and at the same time nearly breaking her heart as he told of his love for Beechwood in so sweet and pathetic a manner, and how brave a little heart he had, after all. But why he had not come directly to her when he heard the news, she was still at a loss to understand.

"Oh, dear!" he finally said, heaving a long sigh, "I really don't know which part I love the most. I guess I love it all the same."

His eyes blinked very hard now, and before he was conscious of their coming, they filled with tears. Then suddenly the situation dawned upon him; perhaps his mother would think it strange for him to talk in that way of Beechwood. He leaned far out of the window, and hastily brushed the tears away, then turned and looked at his mother. Her arms were held out toward him, and he knew now that she actually had read his secret by what he had said.

He gave one spring and was in her arms, with his face buried on her shoulder; but what a fight he was undergoing to keep back the tears and be brave for her sake; for she had told him in that moment, by the tears in her eyes and her sorrowful expression, how sad



she also felt about it all, — at least he thought that was the cause, when in reality it was only her sympathy for her child that caused the tears to come then and made it impossible for her to speak.

“And so my boy knows it all,” she said, holding him very tightly and imprinting a kiss on his head.

“Yes, I know it all,” he replied in a trembling voice, but gaining strength and courage every minute. “It is very sad, but I am going to be very brave about it.” Then he raised his head and sat up straight on her lap, and looked right in her face, feeling very proud and manly that she could see no tears.

“You do not know how sorry I am that we must all leave Beechwood, Paul, especially you, because I know it means more to you than to the other two children.”

“Oh, never mind about me,” said Paul, looking very brave indeed now that the desire for crying had been conquered. “It is I who am sorry for you, Mother dear, because I know how much you love it too.”

“Of course I am very much attached to it, but then think how much more your father loves it than the rest of us. He and his father were born here, and here he has spent the whole thirty-three years of his life, and you only nine.”

“Why, of course it must be worse for him than anybody,” said Paul. “I never thought of that. I am always so selfish, I never think of any one but myself.”

“If we thought of others we would not feel so badly,” said Mrs. Arlington. “Of course it is going to be one of the greatest trials we have had in our lives; but we will make up our minds to bear it bravely, won’t we? And try to forget all about how we feel, when we think of your father. We must do everything we can, Paul, to

make him forget his troubles, for he has more to bear than any of us. Not only the giving up of Beechwood, but the loss of nearly all his money, together with the business responsibilities and worries he has had for months, and, worst of all, he is far from well; that concerns me most above all things."

"I thought he looked sick yesterday," said Paul, "and I was so glad to see him laugh at Roy when we went to the camp. I was wishing I could be like him and make him laugh sometimes too. Roy is so jolly; it seems he is always making people feel happy."

"A sunny, happy nature like Roy's is surely to be envied, Paul, but we are not all of the same disposition in this world. It is just as natural for him to be the gay, romping, mischievous boy that he is, as it is for my little philosopher here to ponder over deep thoughts, and be wanting to know the whys and wherefores of everything. Your pleasures are derived from a different source, my dear, that is the only difference; and we know you are just as happy in your way as Roy is in his, although you do not make as much noise about it."

"You know me, Mother dear, don't you? Many people don't know I'm happy when I really am; but you know it. Why, sometimes I am just as happy as I can be, and yet I can't be jolly like Roy."

"Well, we love you as much just as you are, my boy, and one like Roy I think sufficient in one family," said Mrs. Arlington, laughing. "You have not told me how you learned of your father's failure."

"Oh, yes! I forgot to tell you that, Mother. I was sitting in the summer-house reading, and heard Aleck tell Pat all about it. They did not know I was listening, but I couldn't help it. I wanted to come and talk to

you about it, and know for certain if it were all true; but of course you know it was very sad at first, and I knew you must be feeling badly too, and I did n't want you to see me until I got used to it. Do you think I have been just a little brave about it?"

"Indeed I do, wonderfully strong and brave, and I am very proud of you, for you have made my sorrow much lighter."

"I am so glad, I was afraid I would never get used to the dreadful news. Will you tell me just what a money panic is, Mother, and how it made Father fail?"

"It means that there is very little money in circulation. One of the largest banks failed, which frightened people, causing a great run on the other banks. Every one, you see, wanted to get his money out, fearing more failures. Two merchants failed during this trouble, who owed your father large sums of money; and the great losses he sustained through these failures, and the difficulty in getting money, crippled him to such an extent that he was obliged to bring his business to a stand-still; but remember we are going to try to make him forget all about his troubles when he returns at night, are n't we?"

"Yes, I am going to try ever so hard; and if I ever feel sad again, I will just think how much worse it is for him, and perhaps—perhaps, Mother dear," he said, clasping his hands, and looking up into her face, with his own fairly beaming, "when I'm a man I can buy Beechwood back again."

"Perhaps you can, my darling, who can tell," said his mother, stroking the soft ringlets that lay about his neck.

CHAPTER VIII

BEECHWOOD had only been up for sale two weeks when it was purchased by a wealthy gentleman, whose family were then in Europe, and would not return until the following autumn. Arrangements had been made, however, for the Arlingtons to remain until then, or until Mr. Arlington had found a suitable home for them in a suburb of Chicago.

"I will not be in too great a hurry to send for you all," he said to his family, as they drove with him to the railway station the morning he was to start for Chicago and take his new position. "I want to be sure when I select a home that it will please you, so I intend giving a thorough search through all the suburbs. I know not one of you would be content to live in the city."

"No, we would n't," they all replied.

"Just so it has a little yard to make a garden of, I will be happy," said Paul.

"Where we ten have 'ots and 'ots of fowers, and some birds to sing and a dreat big shady tree," said Grace.

"And where we can see lots of Indians and buffaloes every day," said Roy.

"I am afraid you will at least be disappointed, Roy; you will have to go much farther West to see any Indians or buffaloes," said Mr. Arlington, laughing.

"Oh, pshaw! I thought I should see some in Chi-

cago," said Roy, in a very disappointed tone. "Buffalo Bill lives near there, though, does n't he?"

"No, I think not," replied Mr. Arlington.

"Well, then, I don't think I'll go," and Roy settled himself back in an attitude of deep disgust, losing all his interest in the new home. "I thought I would get acquainted with him, and maybe he would take me with him on some of his buffalo hunts," he continued.

To think of buffaloes made baby Grace tremble with fear; she had seen pictures of them, and they looked very fierce indeed.

"We don't want ter doe where the dreat big buffaloes are, 'tause 'ey might kill us," she said.

"Oh! I would n't be afraid of them," said Roy. "Not if I had Buffalo Bill with me."

"You will never see one in your new home, so do not be in the least alarmed, little pet," said Mr. Arlington, as he lifted Grace from the carriage to the platform at the station. "I will try my best to find a place that even Roy will like, notwithstanding the absence of Buffalo Bill and the Indians. You are all going to be good children now, I am sure, and take good care of the little mother until I send for you, are you not?"

"I will take the very best care of her," said Paul, taking her arm, as they walked toward the front of the platform.

"And so will I," said Roy, taking the other arm.

"And so will I," echoed baby Grace, throwing her arms about her, bringing the procession to a standstill.

"See that," said Mrs. Arlington, laughing. "Now how can you have any fears concerning me in your absence? You are the one we are concerned about,

is n't he, children? To go off entirely alone, so many miles from us all."

"Oh, you mustn't worry about me, little ones," said Mr. Arlington, as all three rushed toward him and clung to him, leaving Mrs. Arlington standing quite alone after that remark of hers. "I shall get along all right, although I shall miss you all sadly; but what would please me most of all would be to hear constantly good reports from home of each of you, and if you will all keep well and happy, I can ask no more," he continued, kissing each one a last good-by, as the train slowed up, and in another minute he stood on the back platform of the car, waving his handkerchief to the little group he left behind, while they continued in return to wave theirs until he was lost to sight.

That very day Grandma and Aunt Helen came out to Beechwood to remain with them until they left for their Western home. Aunt Helen was a great favorite with the children, full of life and fun; she joined them in their play frequently, and amused them in a number of ways; read to them, told wonderful fairy tales, which would keep Roy's attention by the hour. There was only one drawback to her companionship being everything that was desired from Paul's point of view, and that was her lack of interest and sympathy for the great passion of his life, — his wonderful love for the poor. When he was a very small child a ragged man, woman, or child were objects of the greatest interest to him. He seemed to think because they looked poor and forlorn they must be sick and suffering; and he had such a sympathetic little heart that he did not like to think of that. One day, when he was about four years of age, a beggar man with a wooden stump came to the

door. Paul happened to be on the porch alone when he came up. He had never seen such a thing in his life, and it filled him with the greatest curiosity and awe. So surprised was he at first, he was seized with a feeling akin to fear, and stepped back of a porch chair peeping at the man with wide-open eyes and fast-beating heart. It was not that he was actually afraid of him, for he was never afraid of any beggar or pedler, but it was simply the stump, and the fact of the man having his leg off and that queer thing in its place, that awed him.

"I'm not gone to hurt yer, child," said the man, while he waited for some one to answer the bell, noticing what he thought a very much frightened child peeping at him from behind a chair.

Paul made no answer to this remark, but stepped out cautiously and walked around him at a safe distance, with his hands clasped, taking a view of the stump from all standpoints; finally he gained more courage as his curiosity and sympathy increased, and he took a few steps nearer, then said in a most pathetic tone, "Does it hurt you very much?"

The beggar laughed so loud at this that Paul gave a start back, and was more puzzled and curious than ever, though it did lessen to some extent the intensity of his sympathy for him, for if he could laugh in such a hearty manner, it surely could not hurt him much, and yet why did n't it hurt? was a thought that filled his little puzzled brain. He thought so much about this beggar and the stump that he could not go to sleep for a long while that night, and for weeks and months asked question after question concerning that wonderful leg.

So much was he affected by such things that his

parents were always very careful to prevent him, as far as possible, from coming in contact with them.

His interest in the poor did not diminish as he grew older, owing somewhat to the fact that he had many opportunities that tended to develop this characteristic.

His father, together with a number of other wealthy gentlemen and Dr. Andrews, the minister, had founded a home for poor children, two miles from Beechwood. It was considered one of the best managed of that class of institutions, and through this alone, Paul had gained a great deal of knowledge of the poor, being a regular visitor there, and a great favorite among the seventy-five little inmates.

Although to many little Paul appeared more serious and thoughtful than was natural for a child of his age, those who understood him best knew that, with all his quiet old-fashioned ways, he was also very quick to appreciate humor, and that he was even capable of getting off a little joke or pun himself, though he had a serious way of doing so.

One day he sought his mother to ask her something, and found her sitting with his aunt, having a discussion over some material that was to be made into a waist.

He was in a great hurry, but waited politely several minutes for an opportunity to speak, and when he did, the first thing he said was, —

“Well, no matter what you may think about that material, there is one thing I am sure of, and that is, it is all going to waste [waist].”

One afternoon, just a few days after his father had left, he stood on a little rustic bridge that crossed the creek, over the grounds belonging to the parsonage. He was alone, with no companions except those that

nature provided for him: the running stream, the birds, the beautiful trees and shrubbery, the hum of insects. His whole soul responded to nature's influences; for he was by nature a little poet (as they called him at home).

It was a beautiful spot where he now stood, and one he especially loved. He often came here to wait for Dr. Andrews, his tutor, for in summer their school-room had been here close by the water, and Paul had received instruction in branches of study suitable for his years. But he had not come there for that purpose to-day; for Dr. Andrews was away, and Paul had not heard when he expected to return. He was thinking about leaving Beechwood, and it was the first time that he had allowed himself to think very hard about it, since his father left. He had been with his mother almost constantly, and had seemed to realize that she missed his father and was greatly concerned about his health, and felt that he must try to cheer her up, and keep her from feeling lonely and sad, and in doing so he had in a great measure forgotten himself.

"I will try to remember this always, just as it looks now," he was thinking, gazing first up the creek, then down, then up at the trees, with their interlacing branches overhead, then through them at the blue sky like a canopy of silk over all. Then his eyes followed the flight of a bird as it flew to its nest on a leafy bough. He drew a long sigh, and stood quite still, with his hands folded on the rail of the bridge, then he closed his eyes to ascertain if he could still see it all with memory's eye. Yes, he was sure he should always remember it as long as he lived.

His lashes were wet with tears when he opened them

again, and, hastily brushing them away, he stepped from the bridge, and started to walk toward the house. "I must find some one to talk to," he thought, "and must not stay here thinking. I'm not strong, after all, and must get away from myself as fast as possible;" but he had only taken a few steps when he was startled by a noise in the bushes on the other side of the creek, and, turning quickly, he saw Dr. Andrews making straight for the bridge.

"Ah, there you are! I thought I would find you here," called the doctor. "Have you missed me all these weeks, or have you not found time to think of me?"

"Oh, Doctor! I have never missed you so much before," said Paul, as they embraced each other on the bridge.

"I suppose that you have heard the dreadful news about us," continued Paul, with a little tremor in his voice and blinking his eyes very fast.

"Yes, I have heard all, and I returned sooner than I expected for that very reason. Come, let us sit down here on the bench, and talk about it."

"I don't know whether I can talk about it very much," said Paul, his voice still quavering. "You see, I'm not very strong yet. It was so sudden, and it takes a long while to get strong about such things, but I have to try to be all the time, and maybe if I keep right on, after a while I shall get used to it."

"Bravo, my boy, that is the way to talk! Why, you are already very brave, I think, and I am proud of you."

Although he spoke in a very jovial manner, it was with difficulty Dr. Andrews kept the tears from his own eyes, as he looked down in Paul's face, when he spoke,

with its pathetic expression, and heard his trembling voice, as he made desperate efforts to control himself.

He drew him on his knee, and rested his head on his breast, while he held him very close indeed.

"I always like to hear any one say they miss me," he said, "and I can return the compliment, for although I have had very little spare time, I have missed you, Paul, every day, and often wished to be back with you again in the Beechwood grounds. Let me see, it will be six weeks to-morrow since I saw you, and, I think, the longest time we have been separated since you were a baby. I am sure you must have a great deal to tell me; but, first of all, let me tell you how sorry I was to learn of your father's failure, and how well I know just what this change means for you, to give up your beautiful home and all in which you are so interested. But I am sure now, by what I have heard, that you are going to act like a brave little man in the matter, and, after all, I do not think it will be so dreadful as you have imagined. There are many things you still have left to love and make you happy, even if Beechwood is taken away; and you must fight very hard not to let it make you unhappy, or keep your eyes closed to the many blessings still left you.

"You may not be able to feel it now, but later on perhaps you will see that this trial came for some wise purpose, and I am sure you will soon be interested in your new home and surroundings, and find many pleasures that will be entirely new. Your father has written me from Chicago, and states that he is looking in the suburbs for a pleasant house for you."

Paul listened very attentively to all the comforting words of the young minister, and felt more resigned than

ever. Dr. Andrews had a wonderful way of making him see all his little troubles in a new light. How often before he had taken a load from his heart; and now in this, the greatest trial of his life, he was giving him strength and comfort. He nestled up to him still closer until his head rested under the minister's chin.

"Has it ever occurred to you, my boy, that I am as sorry to part with you as you are with Beechwood? Don't you remember that I have frequently told you that one of the greatest sorrows that could come to me would be a separation from you? In a large measure you have taken the place of my baby boy. He would have been very near your age, had he lived, and I would have missed him much more, and my loneliness would have been almost unbearable, had it not been for you;" and as he spoke Dr. Andrews's voice grew quite husky. Paul was aroused immediately; he had not thought of the young minister's attachment in that light before. True, Dr. Andrews had always seemed a part of his very life, like that of his father and mother. They had seen each other almost every day since he was an infant; in fact, Paul had spent more time with him than with his father, for his field of work lay right in Arlington, affording him many opportunities for a call at Beechwood, especially as the grounds joined his own.

Paul was only a few months old when the young minister came to take charge of the church in Arlington and live in the parsonage adjoining Beechwood. He had lived there just one year when his wife and baby boy were both taken away from him, leaving him with a broken heart. He had gone away for some months after their death, being totally unfit for his duties, and on his return had spent much time at Beechwood, taking

a great fancy to baby Paul, with his sweet face and large dreamy eyes, and gradually it seemed as though he was taking the place of his own baby. As the months and years passed, this affection grew stronger, and Paul became an object of the greatest interest and love to the lonely young minister, who watched with deep interest the gradual unfolding of his beautiful character. There being no convenient school, he had, of his own accord, taken upon himself to be his instructor, — a plan which was agreed to very willingly by his parents.

Paul looked up to Dr. Andrews with the greatest reverence and love, and was always quoting him. To hear him suddenly change his tone, and speak so sadly of the coming separation, made Paul feel very sad too, and he began to realize the minister's great affection for him. So much had he been taken up in thinking of Beechwood that other necessary separations had not been realized.

"Have I really taken the place of your little lost baby?" he asked, much affected by Dr. Andrews's tone and manner.

"More than you can ever imagine, my boy," he replied.

Paul nestled still closer to him, and did not know what to say for a minute. How strange that he had not thought more about this parting! How could he get along anyhow without Dr. Andrews, his daily companion, his best friend and tutor? Suddenly he placed his arms around his neck and said very earnestly: "Why, I believe, Doctor, I will miss you a great deal more than I will Beechwood. I forgot all about this; but now I think that I will miss you most of all."

Dr. Andrews just pressed him closer, and knew he spoke from his heart. Then he said, "Thank you, Paul; so you see, after all, we both have the same trouble. But let me show you something I have in my pocket. I have had it with me all these weeks. I found it under a tree the day I left, and I recognized the writing, and also knew there could be only one person who could have written such a pretty little poem!"

While he spoke he took from his pocket a slip of paper and began unfolding it. "Any boy who could write these verses could not remain gloomy and sad very long. Now listen: —

" 'Trill away, pretty bird, sing your sweetest lay;
Sing to the sun above that made this glorious day;
Sing to the fleecy clouds that sail just overhead,
And change at sunset in the West to a golden red.

" 'Sing to the soft green leaves that cover every bough,
Underneath your little feet where you are standing now;
Sing to the running brook where, in its cooling spray,
You bathe and drink its waters many times a day.

" 'Sing to the flowers gay that grow where you abide,
And fill with sweetest fragrance the air on every side;
Sing to your nestlings small in yonder leafy tree,
And for the house you made them, as cosey as can be.

" 'Sing for the food you take them every single day,
So that soon they too might sing a thankful round-de-lay;
Trill away, pretty bird, for all the world gives you and me,
For God above Who made the world, every flower and tree.
Sing to Him your songs of praise, till you can sing no more,
Then maybe, sweet bird, you will sing upon the other shore.' "

"I know what you are going to say," said Paul, laughing as the minister folded the paper with a very amused expression.

"Well! what is it? Let me hear if you have guessed correctly."

"Why, I think you would say, How funny for a boy to see all that a little bird has to be thankful for, and yet not be able to see what he has himself."

"You are about right, Paul. It is rather a good joke, isn't it? To tell a bird to sing praises for all God has given him, and forget to sing them yourself, when you have so much more to be thankful for; but I am sure you will not forget very long, and soon I expect to see you just as happy and gay as the little bird you wrote about. Did you miss the little poem? I found it just as I left the Beechwood grounds, the day I went away, and I thought I would take it with me."

"I remember writing it," said Paul, "but I had forgotten all about it. I must have dropped it the very day I wrote it."

"Here is something else I want to show you, and it corresponds so well with the little poem, I intend having the poem printed on the back. Do you remember the day I took the snap-shot of you as you stood in the rockery, listening to the song of a bird? It made a very pretty picture, and here it is."

Paul was delighted with the photograph he saw of himself, standing in the midst of the ferns that grew in a rocky mound, listening intently to a bird that had suddenly attracted him in a tree near by. While he stood and listened, afraid to move a finger for fear of interrupting the song and frightening the bird away, these verses came into his mind.

"Well, how about Glenwood Home, Paul? Have you been there often during my absence?"

This question thoroughly aroused Paul, reminding

him of all the important news he had to relate in reference to Moll and the organ-grinder.

The photograph fell from his hands, and he jumped off Dr. Andrews's lap, standing before him full of animation, his eyes fairly sparkling with excitement.

"Oh, I forgot all about poor Mr. Graves and Moll," he said. "And I wanted to tell you about them the first thing. I went out one day for a walk while I was staying at Grandma's, and I saw a poor blind organ-grinder, sitting on a stool near a corner, and I went up and got acquainted with him. His hair was white as snow, and he looked very sad and sick. I have his name here in my memoranda, see!" he continued, holding it before Dr. Andrews. "Mr. Graves, number sixteen, Hunter Street, third floor. I have sent him a letter about coming out to Beechwood to spend the day with his little daughter; but Mother said I could not tell him when to come until you returned, so you could find out all about him first. But I know he is a good man, Doctor, indeed I do. Well, after I left him I could not help thinking about him all the time. I walked on and on, and did not even notice where I was going, I was so busy thinking; but after a while I found I was lost, and I was just going to ask some man how to get back to Grandma's, when I heard some children screaming and laughing, and I looked up a little narrow street right near me, and saw some boys and girls teasing a poor, little, ragged girl, who was lying on a cellar door. One big boy, named Bill Jones, was dragging her by the arm so roughly, I thought he would pull it out. I ran right up to him and stopped him. He looked so cross at first that I thought he was going to strike me, but he did n't. I said, Stop that, and never do such a thing again."

Here Paul was interrupted by the sudden appearance of Roy stepping out from behind a tree, and with flashing eyes and a shake of the fist, he said, "Why did n't you send for me, Perseffer? I'de a thashed [thrashed] that Bill good," then like a flash he turned and sped away among the trees and shrubbery as suddenly as he had appeared. For some time Roy had been listening and watching from behind the large trunk of an oak-tree. He saw the affectionate greeting of Dr. Andrews and Paul on the bridge, and noted Paul's trembling voice when they began to talk about leaving Beechwood. And when they sat on the bench, and Dr. Andrews drew Paul on his knee and told him of his love for him, and how he had taken the place of his lost baby, the little scene made him feel very queer. "It's kind of solemn," he thought, as he watched and listened. "They don't want me, so I'll stay here and hide." But when Paul began to tell of the blind man and the ragamuffin, he became very much interested, and when he described Bill Jones's treatment of poor Moll, he began to get excited, and forgot that he was in hiding. But as soon as he had spoken, it occurred to him, and he felt ashamed that he had been caught eavesdropping, so he turned on his heels and quickly fled.

"The little mischievous monkey," said Dr. Andrews, laughing. "Go on, Paul."

Then he continued: "And he let her go; I think he felt ashamed. I sent him for some bread for her, for she was nearly starved to death. She felt better and stronger after she had eaten; and what do you think I did?"

"I give it up," said Dr. Andrews, very much interested.

"I sent an officer over to her mother, who signed her name in one of the Home circulars; then I took her back to Grandma's with me, and the next day we brought her out to the Home. And you should see her now. She is getting stronger and fatter every day, and that dreadful frightened look she had when I found her has all gone away, and she is so happy, because she has some one to speak kindly to her, and plenty to eat every day."

"Well, well!" said Dr. Andrews, "so you have found a little waif for the Home all yourself."

"Yes, all by myself, and wasn't it strange, when I found her, I forgot all about the blind man for a long time? I think that it was because she looked poorer and sicker than he did, and because she was a little child. But I have her here now, well and happy, and won't you help me make the poor organ-grinder comfortable too?"

"What would you have me do, my boy?"

"Why, only to go to his house sometime when you are in the city, if it is not too much trouble, and find out all about him. I am sure he is good and honest, for I can tell by his face, but Mother does not feel sure. You see she did n't get acquainted with him, and she says she must learn something about his character before she consents to have him come to Beechwood."

"Suppose we go up to the house and talk with her about it all," said Dr. Andrews, arising. "I have only a half-hour longer to be with you, as I have an appointment with a gentleman at five."

"Oh, I knew you would try to do something for Mr. Graves when you heard about him," said Paul. "Won't he think Beechwood is beautiful? Of course

he cannot see it, because he is blind; but he can hear the birds sing and feel the grass under his feet, and smell the flowers, can't he?" said Paul, while hand in hand they walked through the trees and over the lawns toward the house.

"I have no doubt the poor old man would enjoy a day in the country very much, if it is possible to get him here; for if all his days are spent on the street of a hot dusty city, turning the crank of an organ, it would be a treat indeed to breathe the fresh country air. I hope I shall find him all that you think him, and that you will have the pleasure of seeing this little plan of yours carried out."

CHAPTER IX

DR. ANDREWS had promised that on his next visit to the city he would try, if it were possible, to find out all about the character of the blind man. Paul now became so interested in the prospect, in which he felt there could be no disappointment, that he was more like his old self again. He had so much to think about, so much to do, and so many pleasant drives and talks with Dr. Andrews, that the days passed very rapidly. He made a great effort to be bright and cheerful before his mother, even when helping her pack many of the little treasures which were to go with them to their Western home. After the men had packed furniture and carpets, the rooms looked quite desolate, and at times he experienced feelings of great loneliness; but he was determined not to look or act in any way that might cause his mother to feel more unhappy, for was he not taking care of her? And what would his father say if he failed to be brave and manly during his absence? This thought braced him up.

"I think this little plan of Paul's about the organ-grinder will be a very good thing for him," Dr. Andrews had remarked to Mrs. Arlington. "It will divert his mind, and I hope for that reason I shall find his character to be all that is desired on investigation."

"I agree with you, and hope you will be successful.

As long as we remain here, I would like, if possible, to have something that would be of especial interest to him, and take his mind off the one subject that has been such a great sorrow to him. Poor little fellow, he has had quite a struggle, and I am surprised to see how well he controls himself."

"He is bearing it bravely," said Dr. Andrews; "but you have so much to do and to think about at present that suppose you leave Paul to me, and I will manage to keep his mind diverted by many things I have already planned."

"Thank you, Doctor, it will be a wonderful help to me and a great relief to my mind, for I could not bear to think of him wandering aimlessly day after day through the Beechwood grounds, with this one thought uppermost in his mind. I have managed so far to keep him with me the greater part of the time since his father left, and he has felt, too, that it was his duty to stay near me. He is trying hard to be brave and cheerful for my sake, I can plainly see; but whether he will be able to continue so through all the trying ordeals yet to come, is very doubtful, and, as you suggest, to keep him constantly interested in something is the only course to pursue."

The day Dr. Andrews went to the city, Paul was in the best of spirits. He romped with Roy, raced with him on their bicycles, played ball, and in fact was at Roy's service for any sport he wished him to join in.

"My! But I'm glad I'm alive to-day, ain't you, Perseffer? You are a jolly fellow this morning," said Roy once, while in the midst of their play, looking at him in a very puzzled way. Paul was always a puzzle to Roy; he was too deep for him, and yet Roy had the

greatest respect for him, and often wished he could say the bright things that Paul did, and write pretty verses about the flowers, the birds, and the trees.

Several times he had tried to compose some poetry; but after thinking for a long while to make two lines rhyme without success, he finally gave up in disgust. But one rainy day he actually did manage to write two poems, which were a great success in his opinion, though he felt doubtful of what Paul's would be, if he showed them to him. He had carried them around in his pocket for several days and could not make up his mind to show them, and there they were now, all crumpled, and mixed with pebbles, dead bugs, strings, and nails.

"Why ain't you always jolly, Perseffer?" he asked, while they sat down on a bridge in the road after a race.

"I don't know," replied Paul. "I try to be, but somehow I can never be like you, no matter how I try."

"Oh, it's easy, Persef," said Roy, straightening himself up and feeling quite proud that such an important person as the Perseffer should express a desire to be just like him, and that there was something, after all, he was capable of accomplishing that Paul envied, and failed to do.

"I will teach you to be jolly," continued Roy, "if you'll only come with me, and do what I say. All you have to do is to have races every day, play football, marbles, climb trees after squirrels, play soldiers, and never, never," he said with great emphasis, "make poetry verses."

"Well, I don't think I could give that up, Roy," said Paul, with a very serious face.

"Well, then, you can never be jolly like me, for

Mother says it worries your brain to make verses, and I know it does too, because — because, Perseffer, I tried once, and it made my head buzz and my eyes ache just trying to think."

While he spoke, he put his hand in the pocket where he remembered he had placed his poems. There they were; but he did not bring them out immediately.

"I think poetries is the hardest work a feller can do," he continued.

"Why, I never knew you tried to make poetry," said Paul, in great surprise.

"I know you did n't, because I never told you. But I did, anyhow, and all by myself, and here they are." Two soiled pieces of crumpled paper were brought forth, which Paul eagerly took and carefully straightened out, while Roy watched him closely to note the effect his great efforts would have on such a competent judge.

Paul started immediately to read aloud.

Once ther wer a farmer jolly and gay
Waitin to work the very next day
To cut down his otes and lode up his hay
He went to the chickans and fed them all
And put the horses in ther right stalls
His work was hard that day to do
O wasent he glad wen he was throe
Then the next morning wen he got up
He put on his clothes and watered the crops
That afternoon he milked the cows
And worked in the fields with a dozen plows
His work was harder that day he sed
O wasent he glad to get in bed
That night he got throe with great delight.
The end.

ROY ARLINGTON.

Paul began to laugh when he finished the first line, and before he was half through, he was laughing so hard he could not make out the words. He was obliged to wait a few minutes to control himself before he could continue.

At first Roy did not know whether to be indignant or not at such disrespect; but he had never seen Paul laugh so heartily, and Roy could never afford to lose an opportunity to have a good laugh, even if it was at his own expense, so his indignation did not last long, and did not affect to any great extent his merry light heart. He finally looked upon it too as a very good joke, and leaned back and laughed with Paul until their sides were sore. The louder they laughed, the louder Nero barked; he was standing by them, having raced and romped with them the past hour.

"Why do you think it is so funny, Persef? I did n't laugh a speck when I wrote it," said Roy.

"Well, it's funny, and yet it's good, Roy. It is just the way you have of saying it. I did not think you could make poetry as good as that. I did n't mean to make fun of it, but somehow I could not help laughing."

"Oh, that does n't matter. Read the other one now."

"Are you sure you won't care if I laugh?" said Paul, wiping the tears from his eyes, for he had laughed until he cried, and actually hesitated to read the other for fear of insulting Roy again.

"No, I don't care; go ahead, Persef," and Roy's face was all in readiness for another laugh, his eyes fairly twinkling with merriment, as he leaned over to watch Paul's face when he began: —

"One day as I was goin past
I found a little flour at last."

Paul could go no farther, for right here he burst forth in a loud peal of laughter in which Roy joined, and again they were convulsed with laughter, the woods near by sending back the echo of their voices, while they continued to laugh as though they would never stop. It was some time before Paul was able to continue the reading: —

“And the little girl stiped down to se
Wat this eligent flour must be
This butiful thing wos a little rose
With buds and leves in a swete reprose
Then she pluckt it with tenders care
This little rose so pirty and fare
Then the little girl went home very fast
And there she found her mother at last
Then she said to her Aunt Laura
I found the pirtiest little flour
And after while it faded away
One blazin red hot summer day.”

“I am sorry I had to laugh,” said Paul, “but you said you did n’t care, and I could n’t help it. But I think it is good, even if I did laugh,” he continued encouragingly. “Why, when I first commenced to make verses, they were no better than those, and every one you make, you see, gets better, and then you are younger, too.”

“Well, I don’t care if they do get better; I am not going to write any more poetries,” said Roy, decidedly. “Oh, look! Perseffer, a horse has fallen down up the road. Let’s go see what is the matter.” In an instant the boys were on their feet, and running as fast as their legs could carry them, with Nero bounding at their heels.

"What is the matter with your horse, driver?" asked Roy, as they approached.

"He's worn out, sonny, that's the matter; he's an old horse, and been ailen a long time past. This load of timber was too much for him this mornin'. I told the boss he was nary good any more, but he said he was, and now see what it's coming to, Jiminy! He's dyin', sure," said the man, stooping over him.

"Can't I do something for him?" asked Paul, his sympathies all aroused for the poor beast.

"Nothin', sonny, nothin' at all. I think he's beyont all help."

"Don't you think it would help him if you put some hot-water bottles on his feet?" continued Paul, stooping down and feeling them.

"We have some at the house you could have."

"And I'll get some blankets from the stable, if you think he is cold," said Roy.

The driver laughed heartily at these suggestions, which immediately lowered him greatly in Paul's estimation, for he could not see how any one could possibly laugh at a dying horse.

"You're kind, sonnies, but he's about gone, and it's no use wastin' me time here. I'll go for a team to haul him away."

"We will take good care of him while you are gone," said Paul.

"All right, sonnies, all right," said the driver, as he walked off. So down they both sat by the roadside, gazing at the poor beast with the greatest sympathy and interest; even jolly Roy wore a very serious face as he said, "I wonder where they will bury him, Perseffer?"

"They may not bury him at all," said Paul, "for, don't you know, they can do lots of things with a dead horse."

"Can they? Why, what can they do?"

"Sometimes they give them to animals in the Zoo for food. And they boil their bones to make glue, and make leather out of their skin, and mattresses out of their tails and manes, and —"

"Mattresses!" exclaimed Roy, interrupting him. "The kind I sleep on?"

"Yes, the very kind you sleep on. They make the best kind of mattresses."

"Well, that's funny," said Roy, shaking his head and leaning over for a closer inspection of the horse. "I never knew I was sleeping on an old dead horse's tail every night;" and he leaned back and laughed heartily at the very idea.

"Well, you are," continued Paul, "either the tails or the manes."

"I never knew all those things could be made out of an old dead horse, Persef."

"Well, I did; but I wonder," continued the little philosopher, standing up and thrusting his hands away down in his pockets, blinking his eyes and knitting his brows, with a most profound expression, — "I wonder," he repeated, "if they make anything out of the wax in his ears."

"Wax in his ears!" exclaimed Roy; "why, candles, of course; anybody would know that."

"No, they don't either," said Paul, "because I know candles are made of bees-wax."

"Well, just look in the ditchonery when you go home, Persef; that will tell you. That's funny, though," said

Roy, suddenly bursting forth in one of his merry peals, as though it occurred to him as being a very good joke; then the joke suddenly dawned upon Paul too, and he joined Roy in one long continuous laugh until again the woods sent back the echo, and Nero barked as long as they laughed. But quick as a flash Paul stopped, and his face assumed a most serious expression. He suddenly thought of the solemnity of the occasion, and was indignant at himself for his laughter, when just a few minutes before he had felt angry with the driver for doing the very same thing.

"What's the matter with you? Do you feel sick, Persef?" asked Roy, noticing the sudden change in Paul's manner and face.

Paul sighed and looked down on the horse very solemnly and said, "I'm sorry I laughed that way at a poor horse whose heart just stopped beating. I would n't like any one to laugh at me right after mine stopped."

"Oh, well! that does n't matter," said off-handed Roy. "Horses don't know anything. If it was a human being I would n't laugh for the world."

"Yes, but you ought to feel sorry even for a beast," continued Paul. "Maybe he had awful pains before he died."

"Well, he has n't any now, Persef, so don't have your worried face on you."

Paul was glad when he saw the driver returning and he had no opportunity to disgrace himself again by laughing in the presence of a dead horse which had just breathed his last.

They saw the load of timber, and the poor horse hauled away, then started for the gate to enter the grounds. They were turning in, when they spied poor

old Sarah Magee coming up the walk. Sarah was an old Irishwoman, who peddled notions; the maids always bought of her; and their mistresses frequently tried to help her along, knowing her to be an honest and worthy woman. The Arlingtons were especially interested in her. She was a cousin of Pat's, and for years they had assisted her in many ways. With their help she had purchased a small house of four rooms, where she lived alone, except when she was laid up with rheumatism, then Mrs. Wesley or Mr. Arlington paid some one to look after her.

"Shure, and ye 'd think I was the queen herself to see them purty boys a bowen and a raisen av their caps to me, callen me Mrs. Magee, like if I was a great leddy," the old pedler had often remarked. "Little gintlemin they are, to be sure, and the loikes of that one Oi niver did see since Oi was born, whin he takes me arm and helps me along, kicken a sthick or sthone out av the way for fear av me sthumblin'."

Both boys ran to meet her when they saw her, and raised their hats politely as they approached.

"Give me your basket," said Roy; "I'll carry it up to the house," and in a moment he was off with the pins, needles, and tapes, while Paul took her arm and assisted her up the hill. She generally came on Saturday to Arlington Heights, and the boys were always on the look-out for her; but she had been laid up with rheumatism for some weeks, and Paul had not heard that she had recovered sufficiently to come out. Then, besides, he had had so much to think about lately that poor Sarah had escaped his mind. As soon as he saw her he wondered whether she had heard the news or not, for he knew how attached she was to them, and how

she would miss them. She always came back again to the Arlingtons for dinner, after making her rounds among the neighboring houses. Then Pat would drive her to the station with her empty basket and a pocket-book full of money. Every summer she spent one whole week there, and what a treat that was, to leave the little hot house in the city and breathe the fresh country air, and sit under a shady tree and knit and doze all day long.

"I wonder if she knows that she will never come out again to stay after this summer," thought Paul, looking at her questioningly as they walked toward the gate.

"I am sorry you were so sick with rheumatism," he said. "It must be a dreadful disease to have, when you can't walk. Is it anywhere besides in the bones?"

"Shure, an it sames it wus in the bones an' ivery part av me besides," said old Sarah, stopping for a moment to rest, leaning on her stout cane, while Paul still kept his arm under hers.

"You are getting better, though, and walk pretty good for one who had it so badly," said Paul, encouragingly.

"Oi'm moighty stiff yit, Masther Paul, and Oi'm a thinking purty wake too," said Sarah, with a groan and shake of the head. "How's yer mither an' father an' the baby an' all the rist?"

"They are all well, thank you, only Father, — he has not been so very well; that is, he has had a great trouble over a money panic."

"Money panic, is it, to be shure? phwat's that agin?"

"Why, it's a time when there's no money in circulation," replied Paul, feeling very big to be able to answer that question in an intelligent manner, remembering his mother's explanation.

"Do yez mane it's some truble wid his business?"

"Yes, you see there was no money to carry it on, because of the panic, and he had to give it up, and he has gone away to Chicago in another business; and after a while we are going too."

"Och, now it's foolin' me yez be, Masther Paul. Phwat can yees father and all av yees be afther doin', so far away, whin this was yer hame so money years? Let me sit fer a toime and rist, fer it's wake yez made me wid thim news."

"I am very sorry it made you weak," said Paul, sitting down beside her by the stone wall. "It made me feel weak too when I first heard it; but you'll get all right again. It's not so dreadful when you get used to it. When we get in our new home, I will write to you, and tell you all about it."

There was no consolation in that, however, for poor old Sarah. She wiped the tears from her eyes, and said sorrowfully, "Yez know, Masther Paul, me larnin' is not very good, and it's not much eddication Oi had, to be shure, so it's little radin' Oi'll be afther doin', bliss yer heart, all the same."

"Then I will send the letters to Grandma, and she will read them to you. She is not going, you know; so please don't be so sad, Mrs. Magee. We will come on to see you sometime," he went on, trying in every possible way to console her, for she was greatly grieved over the sad news.

"Oi know it's ungrateful am Oi, to be forgettin' av the Lord's mercies to me, but whin Oi think av never seein' yez dear faces agin, it lays loike a dead weight on me heart; for Oi'll miss yez so much, but Oi'll niver forgit all yez kindness, if Oi niver see yez purty face agin."

"But you will see us again, Mrs. Magee. You know I must come to visit Grandma, and Dr. Andrews said I must come and visit him too, and of course I will go to see you when I am here, and so will we all."

"Bless yer heart, Masther Paul; it's loike yez to be cheery loike and comfortin' whiniver trubles come, an' it's yerself this very minute Oi knows that is graven to be afther partin' wid yer beautiful hame."

"Of course when I think about it, I cannot help but feel very sad, so I will try all the time not to think."

"Oi'd better git oop now, Masther Paul, and be off to the house; it's wastin' the toime am Oi an' makin' yez sad wid me grafe."

"Yes, I think we had better," said Paul, quickly jumping up, then assisting the pedler to her feet. "Is n't this a beautiful day?" he said, changing the subject, for he feared to continue on that dangerous one any longer.

"Oi niver seen a foiner, Masther Paul, an' a miserable sinner am Oi, an' Oi spake the truth, to hide me eyes to the beautiful sunlight; for whin Oi started out this very day and sthood on me two feet, wid me basket on me arm once more, me heart was as light as a feather, an' Oi samed not to mind me sthiff jint's nary a bit, an' Oi thanked the Lord, Oi did, for the beautiful day, that cheered me loike, an' to think that Oi forgot, and let me old heart grow heavy wid the news yez be afther tellin' me."

While she spoke, old Sarah stood still and wiped her eyes, and looked up through the trees at the deep blue sky overhead, then she gazed at the loveliness around her. Paul did the same, and for a minute neither spoke. "She is feeling as I did at first," he thought,

and his heart was full of sympathy for her. Finally he said, "I know exactly how you feel, Mrs. Magee, and everybody feels sad when a dark cloud comes in their lives; that is, they feel sad for a time, they cannot help it; even the best person in the world can't help it. Why, even Dr. Andrews, our minister, you know, was so sad when his wife and baby died that he could not preach, and had to go away for a good many weeks. But God helped him to get used to it, and the best way He helps us is to make us think of other things. If we thought of that one trouble all the time, we could n't stand it. Why, Dr. Andrews said sometimes it makes him feel so happy, just to come out and stand among the trees and look at the beautiful sky, and hear the birds sing. Just to live in such a beautiful world alone ought to make one happy, he said. Just as you said you felt this morning when you came out in the sunlight.

"Would n't it be dreadful if the sun went away and never shone on us again, and it was always night? And of course no trees or flowers or grass would grow, and how could we live? You see, we must have night and day too in our hearts; if it was always day, and the sun never hid itself, we should grow selfish. The night-time to us, you know, is when our troubles come, and it is impossible, Dr. Andrews said, for any one to be very good who has not gone through some trials in this world. They do not see it at the time, but afterwards they do, because they have been made better for having them. You will be better and so will I, after this, Mrs. Magee, even if we don't feel so now. But we won't talk any more about it, and then we won't feel so badly. I want to tell you all about a blind man I became acquainted with in the city. Dr. Andrews has gone to

hunt him up to-day, and find out all about him; and if he is a good man, we are going to have him out to Beechwood to spend the day."

"As tinder and good as an angel's is yer heart, Masther Paul, to be afther thinkin' av the loikes av us poor folks an' givin' us a bit av pleasure whiniver yez kin, and nary minister could praich the loikes av that sarmen yez be after given me just now: faith, an' Oi would niver want to go to the Church if it's praichin' the loike av that Oi could hear ivery day. It's clear yer make things same to old Sarah, 'bout the night and day, and the clouds that come, which manes our trubles, but the loight come afther the clouds just as thrue as yer say, Masther Paul.

"Where did yez iver foind the poor blind mon yez be afther shpakin' about?"

Paul then told her the whole story of the blind organ-grinder and Moll, as they slowly walked up to the house. Roy had taken the basket to his mother to select some articles from it, as was her custom, and she was down in the path waiting for the pedler when Paul and Sarah arrived at the house.

"Pat has been looking for you, Master Paul, and wants you at the stables," said Hulda, the nurse-maid, as Paul approached.

"I wonder what he wants," he thought, as he walked off, leaving the pedler with his mother. "I guess he feels lonely, and wants to have a little talk. Poor old Pat! I feel sorry for him, I do. I wish we could take him with us."

He had not taken many steps when he met Pat.

"Oi was lookin' out fer yez, Masther Paul, to come say good-by to Ned and Dollie. Yez know the other

hosses have been sold an' gone, and a gintlemin is afther takin' Ned and Dollie this minute."

"Oh, Pat!" exclaimed Paul, clasping his hands, "Ned and Dollie sold, did you say? Why did n't you tell me before? I never thought about giving them up; and Ned, Pat, how can I say good-by to him! Why did n't you tell me about this before, so I could try and get used to it?"

"Oi wus not aboot, Masther Paul, whin the others wus sold, an' did n't meself know Ned and Dollie would be afther lavin', till Aleck told me this mornin'; and Oi knows how yez love old Ned, and the baby her little pony, so Oi wint sthstraight to find yez. The baby wus in the garden, an' Oi tek her oop in me arms, and carried her to the sthables where her Dollie wus sthandin' ready to go wid the gintlemin, and Oi told her she must say good-by to her pet, fer going away it wus never to kum back, and, oh, me bye, it made me heart sick to see her, the blessid darlint. Oi niver afore see the loikes av her grafe, an' it's there she is this minit, and won't lave the pony. See phwat yez kin do wid her, and don't be afther gravin' yerself fer old Ned, me bye, fer yez know phwat yez promised, — to be a brave soldier in this here battle, — an' Oi knows yez will kape your promise?"

"I am trying all the time, Pat, to keep that promise; but that was about the other battle. I did n't know anything of this one, and it takes time to get used to a new one," he said, in a trembling voice, and making a desperate effort to keep the tears back.

He was not at all prepared for this blow, so is it any wonder he had to stand for a while and try to compose himself, screened by the trees and shrubbery, before he advanced to take up so sad a duty, especially to have

witnesses to the sad parting with Ned, that he loved more than any horse they ever had? He had been his daily companion always. His father rode him for some years before he married. He was always gentle and quiet, and the children could be trusted with him. Paul said he believed Ned understood every word he spoke. He was at any rate as intelligent as it was possible for a horse to be.

Grace's little pony, Dollie, had been bought for her just a year before, and she had become very much attached to her.

"It's a sorry day, Oi knows, Masther Paul," said Pat, patting him on the shoulder, while he still stood, making no effort to advance toward the stables, hesitating to see baby Grace's grief and old Ned, fearing he would not succeed in controlling himself. "But niver moind, niver moind, me bye," continued Pat, "if yez niver hev annoy heavier troubles than this, the world will go aisy wid yez, to be shure. Oi knows it's a hard foight fer yez, but cheer oop, cheer oop, an' be the brave little mon yez allays wus."

Paul then heaved a sigh, straightened himself up, and said in a very determined voice, "Pat, I am ready to go. I must act like a brave soldier a great many times before we leave Beechwood."

"It's talkin' loike a little gineral yez be now, Masther Paul," said Pat, in rather a husky voice, and quickly dashing a tear from his eye, as he took a step back that Paul might not see.

Notwithstanding all the courage he had mustered, it nearly gave way when he saw baby Grace standing on a chair, with her arms clasped about her pony's neck, sobbing and talking in a most endearing manner to her,

while Ned stood before him, scraping the stones and shaking his head, as he always did when Paul approached him.

"Dear old Ned," he said, stroking him fondly, and for just one instant buried his face in his mane.

Mr. Stevens, the gentleman who had purchased the horses, was standing near, talking to Aleck and his coachman, and so touched was he at seeing baby Grace's grief, he thought he would give her as much time as possible to say farewell to the pony.

Paul would not trust himself to stay long by Ned; and as a diversion to his own sad feelings, he quickly stepped over to baby Grace, to sympathize with her, and try to console her and coax her away.

"Oh, Bruver Paul," she sobbed, "come quick! 'ey are dawn to take my Dollie away, an' you won't let them, will you?"

Paul whispered something in her ear, to which she answered with louder sobs than ever, "I don't care if I do leave Beechwood, but I want to take my Dollie wiv me, don't I, Dollie?" she said, turning the pony's head around and looking her full in the face, through the tears that were streaming down her cheeks, and waited as though sure of hearing her answer, "Yes."

"Robin! Robin! won't you listen to me?" implored Paul, throwing his arms around her, and speaking very low in a suppressed voice. "You must not keep the gentleman waiting so long. He wants to take the ponies now, because he has bought them, and don't you know it is awful hard for me to say good-by to Ned. Just think, I have known him all my life, and he has always been with me." Here Paul's voice grew very trembly and husky, for a lump arose in his throat, and his eyes

filled with tears, but he quickly recovered himself, gave a cough to clear his throat, and continued, "Don't you know it costs a good deal of money to keep horses, and poor father lost all his in the panic I told you about. It would make him feel so badly if he knew you were crying about giving up Dollie, and that is the reason I won't cry about Ned."

Baby Grace ceased crying now, and listened to all Paul said. She was beginning to feel ashamed of her actions, and to realize that it must be worse for Paul to give up Ned, and yet he would n't cry like a baby. She glanced shyly now at Mr. Stevens, brushed away the tears, and said, "I'm awsul sorry old Ned is dawn, too, Bruver Paul, and I dess I has to leave er man take her if poor Farver has dot no more monies to buy her fings to eat."

"I knew you would be good and brave, Robin. Don't you think we are both brave people?"

"'Es, I fink we are," said Grace, trying hard to keep up her courage, and deserve Paul's praise. "I will jes' say dood-bye once adain, an' en she ten doe," and throwing her arms around the pony's neck, she kissed and hugged her several times.

Just then Mr. Stevens stepped over to the children and said kindly, "I am very sorry you both feel so badly about parting with the horse and pony; and if it will be of any comfort to you, I will leave them here for two or three days longer."

"Oh, won't 'at be nice, Bruver Paul?" said Grace, clapping her hands, and her face brightened up immediately. "I ten have Dollie two or free days, an' you ten have Ned." But she soon resumed the woful expression when she saw no response in Paul's face to

this kind offer, and heard him say, "Oh, thank you, sir! but I think it would be better to take them now."

"I am perfectly willing to leave them, little fellow, if it will give either of you any pleasure," continued Mr. Stevens.

Paul hesitated a moment, and blinked his eyes, while Grace thought, "Oh, I dess er man is dawn to coax him."

"Tell him 'es, you will teep 'em for two or free days," she whispered, leaning over and placing her arms around Paul's neck, as she still stood on the chair.

It was hard to refuse her, but Paul felt it would not be right to keep them, perhaps, if they were already sold; so he straightened himself up, took a hand of Grace's in each of his, and said quite firmly, "I am ever so much obliged to you, sir, but you must take them now. You see, it would be just as bad to-morrow, or the next day, or the next, and I would rather have it ended now."

"If you feel that way about it, perhaps it is better that I should take them now; but I regret very much to be the one to cause you both such a sorrow. However, the day may not be very far off when you both will have others you may think as much of as these."

Several times during this scene Pat was obliged to step behind a tree and wipe a tear from his eye, and he remarked to Mr. Stevens' coachman, "It narely brakes me heart to see the childer partin' wid ivery thing on the ould place."

"Now don't cry any more, Robin," whispered Paul. "You know he must take them, because he bought them, and they don't belong to us any more."

They stood just as they were, and watched Aleck

place the saddle on old Ned, for Mr. Stevens intended riding him, and his coachman was to drive Dollie, hitched to the little cart. Little Elsie Stevens, not much older than Grace, was waiting eagerly for her father's return with the pony and little yellow cart he had told her he would bring back with him.

"Bless your little heart!" he said, stepping up close to Grace, and kissing her tear-stained face, "it is cruel of me to take your pony away, and what a dreadful man you must think me. Is it not so, little one?"

"Bruver Paul say it was the awsul pantic 'at tum, so 'at's why the reason my farver has n't dot any more monies to buy oats and hay wiv," said Grace, shaking her head sorrowfully as it rested on Paul's, and giving an occasional sob.

Mr. Stevens's heart was very much touched by the sad affair and the two pathetic faces, and he did not even smile as he kissed the little tear-stained face again, and then shook hands with Paul, who still stood very quiet and dignified, no one but Pat knowing just how great the struggle was he was undergoing, especially when he watched Mr. Stevens mount Ned. When his coachman jumped in the cart, he helped Grace down from the chair, and hand in hand they walked to the edge of the carriage road, and looked after them until they were lost to sight, then sadly walked away to talk about it all by themselves.

Notwithstanding all this, Paul felt very happy that night when he laid his head on his pillow, happier, in fact, than he ever imagined he could feel, so soon after parting with old Ned.

It was all owing to Dr. Andrews returning that evening with such good news of the organ-grinder. It was

very interesting indeed to Paul to hear him tell all about his visit to the blind man's home, and of all the good things he had learned of his character on inquiry.

"Say, Perseffer, what do you want an old blind organ-grinder out here for?" asked Roy, after Hulda had fixed them comfortably in their beds, and seated herself in an adjoining room with some sewing.

"Oh, just because I want to give him a good time," replied Paul.

"How can you make a blind man have a good time?"

"Why, easy. It will be having a good time for him to have enough to eat, and rest from his organ all day, and sit under shady trees, and row on the creek, and lots of other things I can do to make him have a good time."

"What day is he coming?"

"Next Thursday, if it is clear; and if it rains, they will come the first clear day."

"Have you got it down in your rememberandrum?"

"No, I did n't put it down, because I am sure I won't forget. I shall be thinking about it nearly all the time."

"Gee whiz! Persef, suppozin' he would be a picket pocket."

"A what?"

"A picket pocket, don't you know, a thief, who pickets pockets, of course."

"Oh, you mean one who picks pockets, I guess," said Paul, laughing, but at the same time feeling very indignant that his friend should be accused of anything so dreadful.

"I know that Mr. Graves is no kind of a thief at all,"

he said. "Dr. Andrews found out all about him, and he is a very good man. You must help me give him a good time, Roy, and his little girl too, for she is coming with him. She has something the matter with her hip, Dr. Andrews said, and walks lame. Isn't it dreadful when you think there are hundreds just like Mr. Graves and his little girl, and Moll? Why, the policeman told me that if he commenced once to hunt them all up, he would never stop, there are so many. That is worse to think about than leaving Beechwood. You must go to the station with me to meet them. Dr. Andrews is going in early to bring them out, and told me to be at the station with Ben and his two-seated carriage. You will go, won't you, Roy?"

No answer; Roy was sound asleep. The last speech was too much for a sleepy, tired boy. He had no more time to think of blind organ-grinders, lame Hesters, or anything else. But the little poet and friend of the poor lay awake for a long time, thinking of them, and hoping the day would be clear and bright.

CHAPTER X

IT had been a month since the organ-grinder had received Paul's letter, inviting both him and his daughter to Beechwood to spend the day. Hester was just preparing their evening meal when it was handed to her. At first she thought there must be some mistake, for such a thing as a letter finding its way to their isolated and miserable home was something unheard of. She sat down and spelled the words over and over again, in order to be quite sure. Yes, it must be for her father, she concluded, for that is his name, plain as can be, and the exact address, too. "I wonder who could have sent it?" she thought, as she turned it over and held it up to the light, vainly endeavoring to penetrate its mysterious contents through the envelope. "I better not open it until Father comes home; perhaps there might be some pleasant surprise for us both;" and so deciding, she arose and placed it safely back of the little iron clock on the mantelshelf, then continued preparations for their simple meal.

In one of the poorest neighborhoods in the city, and on the third floor of an old house that sheltered eight families, lived Hester Graves and her father.

There was a time, just three years before, when they had lived quite comfortably, and Hester never knew what it was to be hungry. She was always deli-

cate, having had hip disease from birth; but her mother had always given her the most tender and watchful care, so that her general health was in a fairly good condition those days, and she was able to attend school. Although she could not join in the romping plays with her companions, she was light-hearted and happy, and knew hardly a care. She lived over those days very often in her thoughts and tried to picture things as they were then. She could see her dear mother's face bending over her to kiss her good-by as she was about to leave gayly for school; and her father, strong and well, returning home in the evening from work with a bright face and cheery words; then all three sitting down to supper with as much wholesome food as they desired. It all seemed like a dream now, for so much had Hester suffered in both mind and body that it was to her like fifty, instead of three years, since those happy days.

Sickness came first to her father, through which his sight became so impaired that he was obliged to give up work entirely; then their little savings gradually dwindled away until they finally had to depend entirely on Mrs. Graves, who did embroidery for one of the large stores. Hester was obliged to leave school and assist as much as possible. There was the little house to be kept clean, meals to cook, and her father to be waited upon, for he required much attention. His mind never seemed to recover its normal condition after his long illness, and that, together with being nearly blind, made him a great care and anxiety. So great indeed had been the shock to his system that he now looked like a very aged man. Hester often assisted her mother with the embroidery, it now

being their only means of support. But it did not agree with her to be so much confined; she missed the daily walks and exercise in the open air, and the companionship of her little school friends. She began to lose her appetite, and her back and hip began to trouble her.

Her mother noticed all this, and yet was powerless to make things easier. She was herself a very frail woman, and soon her health gave way entirely under the constant strain. She became low-spirited and extremely nervous; then a cough developed, causing her much distress and the loss of the needed rest at night. They had moved to cheaper quarters several times, and sold gradually most of their furniture.

Then the dreadful day came when Mrs. Graves died from overwork. Then indeed did Hester nearly lose her courage, and wish that she too might be taken; but when she thought of her poor helpless father, she tried to banish that wish from her mind. "There will be no one to take care of him if I go," she thought, "and they will take him to the poorhouse." A neighbor told Mr. Graves a few days after the funeral that he thought it would be a good idea for him to get a hand-organ. "It is better than sitting all day thinking and doing nothing," he said. "You will surely manage to pick up some pennies every day, and, if you say so, I will go see what I can get you; a second-hand one would answer every purpose."

This suggestion seemed to brighten Mr. Graves up wonderfully. "My poor little Hester!" he said mournfully, shaking his head, "I must do something for her; she cannot sew all day; and you are right, neighbor, it's better than sitting here doing nothing.

"I will do it! I will do it!" he continued, getting up and walking the floor excitedly.

Hester cried when he told her of his intentions; but he did not see the tears, his sight was too far gone for that. It was dreadful, Hester thought, for her poor sick father to sit on the sidewalk asking charity; and yet he seemed to be so pleased with the idea that it might be a good thing for him, after all.

"It's the only thing to do, the only thing, Hester child," he said. "Why didn't they tell me before? Now I can get some money to buy bread for my poor little girl. I must do something. I can't sit here any longer thinking; it is driving me crazy, Hester child. I shall be better then, yes, better," he continued, walking up and down the room and muttering to himself.

After all, he was right; something had to be done, and it was better than starving, Hester concluded. For it seemed to her like some gigantic task just to prepare their simple meals and keep their two tiny rooms in order.

The organ was purchased with money obtained by the sale of her mother's watch. It was all they had left to sell of any value, so they parted with it, though it caused them both much sorrow.

Hester now was lonelier than ever. Her father was away all day, carrying a crust with him for his midday meal. He was quite successful, however, and never a day passed that he did not bring home some change. It was a great relief to them both when they found that he could thus earn enough to pay their rent and to provide for the absolute necessities of their life.

Mr. Graves's health seemed to improve somewhat upon taking up his monotonous occupation, and his spirits grew brighter, happy, doubtless, in the thought that he was doing something for his child.

Hester was beginning to get accustomed to his occupation, and to feel perfectly resigned to it.

She continued to embroider when she could, according to her strength; but her eyes were very weak, and for that reason she could not work steadily.

And so it was just at this time a sweet message came one day to the little sufferer and her father, to bring a ray of sunshine to their hearts and to make them forget, for a time at least, their many miseries.

She said nothing to her father the evening the wonderful letter arrived until they had finished their meal and the dishes were washed and put away; then she brought it out from behind the clock, and, taking a little stool, sat down by her father's knee.

"I have a surprise for you to-night," she began. "Can you guess what it is?"

The organ-grinder only shook his head in reply.

"Why, a letter, Father; it came just before you returned," and Hester placed it in his hand.

"A letter for me, me, Hester child? Why, how strange! I don't know who could send me one. But open it, and let us hear what is in it," he said, handing it back.

Hester was just about to tear the envelope when her father suddenly clutched at her arm excitedly and said, "I do believe it is from that little child I told you about."

"Do you think so, Father? I never thought of him; it might be."

The organ-grinder had indeed guessed right, — it was from Paul Arlington.

The first thing Hester saw as its contents were brought forth was a photograph of a beautiful stone mansion, with grand old shade trees and sloping lawns. "Oh, Father!" she exclaimed, with great delight, "I wish you could see this sweet picture. But I will read the letter and find out what it all means."

DEAR MR. GRAVES, — Did you think I had forgotten you? Well, I hav n't, so I write this to tell you so. I have thought of you a great many times, and tried to get in to see you, but could n't. I was not able to because since the day I became acquainted with you I have had great troubles, which I did not expect, and it took so much time to try and get used to them, and my grandma came to Beechwood to stay, so I could n't go to visit her in Philadelphia, and everybody is so busy here they can't find time to take me to the city, but I have talked to my mother about you, and when Dr. Andrews comes home, he is going in to see you and bring you and your little girl to Beechwood to spend the day. I know you will like it, for everybody does. It is so beautiful you could n't help it. There are so many trees, birds, and flowers. You need n't bother about your organ, just take a rest from it all day. I send you a picture of Beechwood, so your little girl can see it and tell you about it, only half of it is not there.

Your very dear friend,

PAUL ARLINGTON.

For a moment neither Hester nor her father spoke a word after the letter was read. Hester bowed her weary head on her father's knee, and he gently stroked the thick brown locks, then said in a husky voice, "A whole day in the country; you're glad, ain't you, Hester child? My poor, tired, little girl!"

Hester's eyes were full of tears, but they were tears of joy, caused by the emotion within. "I cannot tell you how glad I am, Father dear. I am afraid it is too good to come true."

"No, no, don't say that, Hester child, for it will come true, I know. If he said so, I am sure of it," said her father.

Hester raised her head and clasped her father's trembling hand, looking up in his thin, wan face. Her heart was filled with joy to think of the pleasure a day in the country would be for him, while the old man was thinking only of his frail child and the pleasure it would give her.

How often Hester had wished to live in the country, or even go for a short stay in the summer, and run over the green fields, breathe the fresh, cool air, and pick wild flowers by the wayside. She often gazed wistfully out of the window over the housetops and chimneys, and longed for a resting-place somewhere beyond them all, away from the smoke and soot and the noisy, dusty streets of the big city. For three years her life had been one monotonous round with no pleasant variations; she had struggled with the same physical pains and weaknesses every day, and striven to solve the difficult problem of managing in the best possible way their little income. She had often longed to go to the park; even that would be a great treat, but it was impossible to walk there, and she felt that even car fare could not be spared; and so poor lame Hester breathed the same air the year around, laden with smoke and odors from the ill-kept houses and shanties around her.

"What was it the child said to me that day?" asked

her father, trying to recall all the conversation that had passed between Paul and him. "There's something wrong here, Hester child," he said, touching his head. "I can't remember things as I used to; something gone, — gone, my little girl, never to come back again," and he shook his head sorrowfully. It always made Hester feel very sad when her father talked in this strain. It was so pitiful to see him struggling with his weak memory.

"You are not very well, that is all, Father dear," she said encouragingly. "You know you never recovered entirely from that long sickness; but you are getting stronger every day, and soon you can remember everything just as you used to. Don't you remember? Now think. The little boy asked you what your name was, and where you lived, and who I was, when you said Hester lived with you. Then he said he was so glad he got acquainted with you, and was coming to see you sometime."

"Oh, yes, yes! now I know," said the poor old man.

"Let me tell you about the picture, Father. I wish you could see it. The house is like a palace I have seen in fairy books. It has wide porches, and vines are growing over them, and there are great large trees, some as high as the house, and I can see beautiful flower-beds and —"

"Yes, yes, Hester child," interrupted her father, leaning back in the chair with his eyes closed; "your mother is there now."

"Mother there?" repeated Hester. "Why, no, Father, she is not there. She is in heaven, you know;" and Hester looked up at him with a puzzled

expression, then realized that his mind must be wandering a little, as it did occasionally. He was thinking of his wife, and that she had gone to a palace such as Hester was describing, where she was awaiting him.

Hester took his hand again, and said, "Mother is not on earth any more, Father; don't you remember?"

"No, not on earth, Hester child, not on earth," he repeated.

"But listen, Father dear," she continued, trying to arouse him. "This beautiful place I am telling you about is here on earth, where the little boy lives who sent the letter, and who talked so kindly to you that day; and just think that we are going there to spend a whole day."

"Yes, I hear, Hester child, and I would like to be with that little one again before I die. He will be there, won't he? And we will be so happy."

He seemed to return from his wanderings now, and they talked for a long time about the beautiful picture, and wondered how soon the kind gentleman would come for them. Hester hoped it would be very soon, especially for her poor father's sake; but day after day passed and still no gentleman made his appearance, and no letter to explain why, until finally she began to lose all hopes of such a thing ever coming to pass. Her father, however, still hoped on. "Something has happened, Hester child, I am sure," he would say, "or he would have kept his word; but he'll come yet."

One morning in July Hester sat by the window, trying to work on a piece of embroidery. It was a very hot day, and their room being next to the roof, the heat was almost unbearable. There was no cooler place to which she could go, unless in the narrow

street among the rough, noisy children, who only went indoors to eat and sleep. She shrank from coming in contact with these children; it was enough to hear their noise and coarse language from her window; besides, her lameness made her very sensitive and afraid to appear among them for fear of being ridiculed, and so there was no alternative for poor Hester but to keep in her hot room, going out only when necessary to make purchases for their simple meals.

Since the warm weather had come, she was feeling unusually weak and languid. The heat had prostrated her to such an extent that it was as much as she could do some days to keep on her feet. She had done very little embroidery for several weeks past, for her eyes had become so weak and painful it was impossible to work for any length of time. Then her back and hip ached constantly, making her restless and nervous and unable at times to sit up straight. Her nerves were breaking down from the strain she was constantly under, and every sudden noise startled her, and her heart would palpitate, beating so hard and fast that she thought frequently she was dying; and she would have prayed that it might be so, had it not been for her father.

As she strove to make some headway with the work that should have been finished some weeks before, she was thinking again about the letter and her great disappointment.

She had given up all hopes of ever hearing from the little boy again, or seeing the kind gentleman he said he would send. She often wished now that the letter had never come. She tried to console herself with the thought that it was better, after all, for neither she

nor her father had any clothes suitable to wear to such a place, and every one would stare at them, and perhaps laugh at their shabby appearance.

She was seated on a low chair which her father had made for her before his illness, with cushions of ticking tied to the back, seat, and arms. In bygone days the ticking was never visible, for her mother always kept the cushions neatly covered with bright figured chintz; but that had worn out a long time ago, and Hester generally kept an old shawl thrown over the chair to protect the ticking, for if that wore away she had no money to replace it. She drew the little chair as close up to the open window as she could get it, but not a breath of air seemed to be stirring. At times she felt as if she were suffocating, and the stinging pains in her eyes forced her to close them frequently and lean her aching head back on the chair, while her hands fell listlessly in her lap. Then a drowsy feeling would come over her, and she thought she should take a short nap. Perhaps it would make her feel better to try. She had composed herself for a little sleep, when suddenly she was aroused by a knock on the door, which made her tremble from head to foot. What! what if it should be the gentleman? was her first and only thought. With fast-beating heart she arose and tottered to the door, and with trembling hands turned the knob; and there stood before her the finest-looking gentleman, Hester thought, that she had ever seen in her life.

"Does Mr. Graves live here?" he asked pleasantly.

Hester could not find her voice immediately, so great was the emotion within, but in answer she opened the door wide and nodded her head, which all meant to

Dr. Andrews that he did live there, and to walk in. Poor child! she was so weak and nervous she could not bear the least excitement without trembling in a sort of nervous spasm.

Dr. Andrews saw it all at a glance, and understood. He was accustomed to going among the poor, and was a good judge of their characters. The crippled child, pale and thin, standing before him in her physical weakness, aroused his deepest sympathies. He noticed that she was neat and that the room was the same.

"Here is one of God's little suffering ones almost ready to be taken to Himself," he thought, as he stepped in the room and tried to make the poor trembling child feel at her ease.

"Are you Mr. Graves's daughter?" he asked, as Hester handed him a chair and sat on the edge of one herself.

"Yes, sir," she now managed to reply.

"And your name is Hester, is it not?"

"Yes, sir," she replied again.

"Well, Hester, I have come to ask you and your father out to Beechwood to spend a day. I believe you received a letter from my little friend some time ago, telling you all about it."

Hester nodded her head.

"He met your father, I believe, and has taken a great fancy to him, and is very anxious to see him again before he leaves Beechwood for his Western home; and he thought, too, it would give you both a great deal of pleasure to leave the hot, dusty city and spend the day in the country, so he has sent me to tell you to come next Thursday, if that day will be satisfactory to you both."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said Hester, growing more composed every minute. "Any day will suit us."

"Very well, then, I will call for you early next Thursday morning; and if it should rain, I will call the next day."

"Have you no sisters or brothers? and do you live alone with your father?"

"I never had any sisters or brothers; and since Mother died, there is just Father and me."

"And do you do the housework and take care of your father?"

"Yes, I do what I can," replied Hester, the tears coming to her eyes as she glanced around the room, ashamed of its look of poverty, and wondered what sort of a girl he would think her, to be able to take no better care of her father than to allow him to sit on a street corner all day asking charity.

"You are a brave little girl, Hester," he said, wiping off the beads of perspiration that formed on his forehead, and wondering how the little sufferer ever managed to exist so long in such an atmosphere. "You are not strong enough for so many cares, I am afraid, little girl."

"What is that?" he continued suddenly, seeing the piece of embroidery on the old cushioned chair by the window.

"That is my work, sir; but I am not able to do very much on account of my back and eyes. If I were only strong I could make a good deal of money, and Father would not have to be on the streets all day," and as she spoke, Hester's eyes filled with tears again. She clasped her hands nervously together and followed Dr. Andrews as he rose and walked over to examine the work.

The tears almost came to his own eyes when he saw the fine stitches, and thought of the labor, the suffering, each one had caused this little martyr.

"I should think this was very tedious work, and hard on the strongest eyes," he said, turning toward Hester, who now stood close beside him with her hands still clasped and her eyes filled with unshed tears.

"It is fine work; but I love to do it when I am well," she said. "I only wish I could do more, because I could help Father so much. He suffers more than I do, for he is blind, you see, and sick besides."

"Well! I do not wonder at all that your back aches, my poor child, or that your eyes have given out. Take this chair," he said. "You do not look strong enough to stand."

Hester did so, and Dr. Andrews drew up one of the wooden ones and sat close beside her.

"Now, my dear child," he went on, "I want you to look upon me as your friend, also the little boy who sent me; and if you do just as I tell you, it will never again be so hard for either you or your father. First of all" (taking out his pocket-book and handing her a ten-dollar bill), "I never want you to take another stitch on this piece of work; then I want you to accept this money, and buy all the good things to eat you desire, and any clothes you are in need of. Spend it all between now and Thursday, and by that time my little friend Paul and I will have things arranged for your future. I will be here early Thursday morning, so cheer up, little Hester; do not be downcast, for God has sent some one to look after you now that you are ill and unable to work."

Poor Hester was again too much surprised to speak. A ten-dollar bill to spend right away for clothes and food, and not a cent to be saved! It was like a great fortune to her, and she lay back among the cushions in a little limp heap, her joy too deep for words, while the kind face still bent over her, speaking such encouraging words, — words which seemed to be gradually lifting her out of her misery and suffering, and which made the bare hot room lose all its dreariness.

“Do not exert yourself any more than is absolutely necessary; drink plenty of good milk, and I am sure by Thursday you will be greatly improved.”

“Oh, I shall not mind anything now,” said Hester, the tears dropping on her cheeks. “You have made me very happy, sir, but somehow I can’t help crying.”

“That is all right, my child. You need not be ashamed of the tears. They are often a great relief to overtaxed nerves and a tired little brain; but soon they will all disappear, and you will be so happy and strong there will be no desire to shed them.” Then Dr. Andrews made his way down the narrow rickety stairs, while Hester closed the door and sought again the cushioned chair, to think about it all. The tears were now streaming down her face, and she made no attempt to check them. They seemed to be an outlet to all the pent-up emotion she had been struggling against for months, yes, and even years. All her sorrows were piled up like a great mountain against her heart, almost crushing it with its awful weight; but it seemed now to be melting away with the tears, and a feeling of peace and rest was gradually pervading her whole being. It was a comfort just to sit and enjoy her own happy thoughts. She felt that her future was

now in this good man's hands, and there was nothing to look forward to but happiness. Finally her tired eyes closed, she sighed, and unconsciously fell asleep with the precious bill clasped in her hands.

For two hours the weary child slept on; then she awoke suddenly with a start and looked about her, puzzled for an instant, then it all came back to her. No, it was not a dream, for there was the bill still in her hands; and she smoothed it out carefully, folded it as tenderly as though it had life and could feel, while she planned all the purchases she would make that very day.

She felt refreshed after the long nap, and the pain in her back and hip was scarcely noticed, just because her heart was light, and she had so many pleasant things to occupy her thoughts. "First of all, I will buy a good supper for Father," she thought. "He would get stronger much faster if I was only able to buy him plenty of good food every day. I will buy him a new hat and shirt, and myself a new calico dress to wear to the beautiful mansion. I have not been so happy for years," and she arose to start out immediately to make all these purchases.

She took down her old straw hat from a nail; then with her basket, and the precious bill laid carefully in the folds of a worn-out wallet her father had carried years ago, off she went, locking the door carefully behind her.

She decided not to make her purchases in the little shops in that neighborhood, as had always been her custom. No! for once she would get the best that could be bought, and give her father a treat. She thought very little of herself. Her greatest delight

in it all was thinking of the pleasure and comfort that her purchases would give her father. She could scarcely wait to tell him of the kind gentleman's visit.

Meat, potatoes, butter, bread, coffee, and sugar were among the provisions piled up in the old basket.

The storekeeper gazed at the child, then at the bill, in a very suspicious manner. He could not understand how such a poorly clad child should be in possession of so much money. He stepped behind the desk and examined it carefully for a minute. It was no counterfeit, he was sure of that. "She must have stolen it," was what he concluded; but having no evidence of this, he, of course, could not accuse her, so he handed her the change that remained after the purchases, and said nothing.

She never imagined the storekeeper's suspicions, however, or noticed his gaze, or the remarks made about her. She was too much taken up with her own thoughts to notice anything.

Before she was halfway home, she found the basket too heavy for her to carry without resting. She had been unconsciously changing it from one arm to the other, and her trembling knees almost gave way from under her before she realized how weak she was. Her arms, too, ached so that it was impossible to hold the basket another minute. She placed it on the sidewalk and sat down on a step close beside it, panting for breath and wiping the perspiration from her face with the calico apron which she wore to hide the patches in her dress.

After this she could only walk a short distance at a time; and when she finally reached the house and

slowly climbed the two flights of stairs, she nearly fainted with the exertion. She managed to lock the door after her, then sank down on the floor beside the basket, too exhausted to move for some minutes.

As she recovered somewhat, it suddenly occurred to her that she had eaten nothing since early in the morning, and it was now three in the afternoon. As soon as she gathered sufficient strength she arose and made herself a cup of coffee and ate some bread and butter. She never ate sufficiently at any time, and was really suffering for want of proper nourishment.

After eating, she lay on her cot in the little closet-room to gain as much strength as possible before preparing the evening meal, which was to be a regular feast.

It was an evening long to be remembered. The organ-grinder was nearly wild with joy when he heard Hester's story. He laughed and cried by turns, rubbed his hands excitedly, and patted Hester every few minutes, thinking chiefly of her happiness.

"Say that part again, Hester child, what the kind gentleman said about it not being so hard for you any more."

"Not only for me, but for you too, Father. He said, 'I want you to look upon me as your friend, also the little boy who sent me; and if you do as I say, it will never again be so hard for you and your father.'"

"And that means that he will see after my little girl and take care of her after I am gone."

"No, no, Father; do not talk so. He meant it for you even more than he did me, for the little boy, you know, never saw me, and he sent him to help you.

You must not think of dying, Father, for God has sent some one now to help us, and perhaps we shall have many happy days together before you die."

But the old man did not seem to notice her words. He had but one idea of Dr. Andrews's visit, and that was that he had come to take his little child out of her dark and lonely life, and that now he could die in peace. It was only to take care of her that he had struggled to live.

"I am ready to go if you are cared for, Hester child," he said, taking his hand from hers and stroking her hair.

"Oh, Father dear! won't you listen to me? If you talk that way I shall not want to live either, and I won't be happy, after all. I thought this would be such a nice evening, and you would be so happy. Won't you try for my sake to live? It makes me sad to hear you talk so, now that everything is so bright. There's our good supper waiting, too, all a present from the kind gentleman. Come, let me take your chair over, and please don't think those gloomy thoughts any more. I know you are hungry, and everything is all ready."

He arose and Hester assisted him to the table, cut his meat, mashed his potato, then sat down near him, talking all the while as cheerfully as possible.

When she said it made her unhappy to hear him talk about dying, and that she would wish to die too if he did not try to live, he aroused himself and made an effort to be more cheerful for her sake. "I'll say no more about leaving her," he thought. "Of course it makes her feel sad; I always forget that." He tried now to interest himself in all she said, and show

his enjoyment of the bountiful meal she had taken such pleasure in preparing.

"That 's a good meal, Hester child, and I thank the kind giver with all my heart," he said, pushing back his chair.

As quickly as possible Hester cleared the things away, and took her accustomed seat on the stool at her father's knee. Then they talked of Paul Arlington, — the kind minister he had sent, and of all the happiness in store for them. The photograph of Beechwood was brought out again and talked over, and Paul's letter read and re-read. Hester was rejoiced to note the change in her father and to see him act as though he was just as pleased as she was in anticipation of the great pleasure in store for them.

"Just think, Father dear, only a little while longer, then we shall stand on the cool green grass in the country. The air will be so cool and sweet, and maybe they will let me bring some flowers home to make our room look bright and pretty. Do you think they will?"

"They will; they will, my child."

"You will try to get well, won't you, Father, now that help has come? You don't want to leave your little girl all alone in the world. I have no one but you now, and you must keep on trying to get well and strong if you love me."

"I will try, Hester child, I will try," he replied fondly, determined to say nothing more, if he could help it, to put a damper on her new happiness.

There was no little girl so happy as crippled Hester that night! "I know Father will get stronger now," she thought. "He is trying to be more cheerful, and

when he has plenty to eat, and knows that I am looked after, perhaps that cloud will disappear entirely from his mind, and he will be able to talk and think, just as he used to." Soon Hester fell asleep, and found herself in her dreams walking by a beautiful stream with her hand in her father's. Flowers were blooming and beautiful birds were carolling among the leafy boughs, and her father said, "See, Hester child, is n't it beautiful? and to think we shall always dwell here." Then she turned and looked up in his face, and was amazed at the transformation. Had he been touched by a magic wand? For he looked just as he looked years ago, before his illness. The same thick, wavy brown hair in place of the long, thin white locks. His face was round and full with the glow of health, and, best of all, his eyes were open, clear and bright, and full of intelligence, and he was looking at her, and able to see all that she was enjoying in this wonderland. The pain had left her back and hip entirely, and she walked with a firm step, for no suffering ever came to the land of Beechwood they had just entered. Before them, leading the way, walked a beautiful boy, with golden hair that glistened in the sunbeams like spun silk. Now and then he turned to say something in a sweet, silvery voice. "This is the way, come right on; it is still more beautiful just above, and you will never get tired walking here," he said, "for no other land is as fair as Beechwood."

Hester and her father gazed at the face in wonder and admiration. Hester wished that it were always turned toward them; it was just such a face as she imagined angels had, — the clear white skin, the wonderful eyes, full of love and sympathy, and the golden

hair like a halo about his head. On, on he led them, through one enchanting scene after another, until finally Hester's slumber grew deeper and the vision slowly vanished away; and she knew no more until the bright rays of the morning sun streamed in the little window and awoke her. She arose, feeling stronger and more refreshed than she remembered having felt for a long time.

CHAPTER XI

WHEN Paul opened his eyes on that long looked for morning, the first thing he did was to run to the window, throw the shutters open wide, and step outside on the little balcony, to be quite sure of there being no indication of a black cloud, though he had seen the sunbeams playing on the walls of his room when in bed.

He stood still for a moment, searching the sky in all directions through the green leaves that covered the balcony, and they made a beautiful framework around the white figure, with loose wavy ringlets blowing in the fresh morning breeze. "I do not think it could be finer," he thought, his eyes sparkling with pleasure, and clasping his hands on the vine-covered rail in ecstasy. The breeze carried with it the scent of new-mown hay, making the air deliciously fragrant. He listened to the birds and watched them fly from tree to tree, some with a fat worm for their nestlings. Groups of cows lay here and there in the fields, lazily chewing their cud, and the water in the creek beyond sparkled in places where the bright morning sun shone full upon it.

Altogether, Paul thought it was one of the most beautiful days he had ever seen, and he was sure that the organ-grinder and his daughter would be charmed with dear old Beechwood.

Stepping back into the room, he began hastily to dress, and called Roy, who still lay soundly sleeping.

"Come! please hurry, there's lots to do before Mr. Graves comes."

Roy yawned, rubbed his eyes, looked at Paul for a moment through half-closed lids, then gradually they closed tightly again, and took another short nap.

"I say, come, get awake, Roy, and don't be so lazy," continued Paul, going to the bed and shaking him. "You will be late, and you are going with me to the station, you know."

"It is too early, Persef; the blind man has n't had his breakfast yet," said Roy, drowsily.

"Oh, yes, he has. Organ-grinders get up early, and I am sure he is waiting now for Dr. Andrews."

It was not long before both were dressed in their sailor suits, which Roy had suggested wearing, because they intended to take their guests rowing on the creek.

"He will think we are real sailors, Persef, and we'll sing our sailor song you made, won't we?"

"You forget that he is blind, Roy, and cannot see the suits."

"But his little girl can, and she will tell him all about them. I bet he'll think it's a jolly picnic, anyhow, even if he can't see, won't he?"

"I think he will," replied Paul.

"Dr. Andrews said he was n't a picket pocket, after all, did n't he?"

"Yes, he found out all about him, and he is a very good man, but I knew it before. I could tell by his face."

"Why did n't you let him bring his organ out, Persef? I like organs," said Roy, as later on they sped along the road toward the station.

"Oh, well, you see, he plays the organ every day except Sunday; and he must be tired of it, and it would n't rest him a bit if he had to play it all day here; besides, it is too heavy for him to carry such a distance, and I want him to have a happy day once, and never think of the old organ. What do you think, Roy, about this secret? They are never going back to the city again to live; but Glenwood Home is always after to-day to be their home, and won't they be glad when they hear about it?"

"To always live at Glenwood Home!" exclaimed Roy. "Why, Persef, I did n't know before it was a blind-asylum [blind asylum]."

"Well, it is n't; but then you see they could n't take Hester without him, because he is all alone, and sick, and may not live very much longer, and they thought it a shame to separate them, and Dr. Andrews and I talked it over with the Managers, and they all agreed to take him and do what they could for him."

"What do you think he is, Perseffer, a Presbyterient, a Comregrational, a Biscoble, a Democrack, or a Publican?"

"I have n't asked him yet about his religion, but I think he's a Quaker," replied Paul, "because he looks something like one. He wore a white high hat, and he had no neck-tie or collar on, and you know the Quakers always dress very plainly, but he was such a poor plain one."

"He must be a funny-looking old fellow, I think, Persef," said Roy, bursting forth in one of his merry peals, as he imagined the organ-grinder's appearance from Paul's description.

He was becoming very much interested in Paul's

wonderful blind man, as the time approached for his arrival.

"Why don't he put an abbertisement in the paper? Maybe he could get something better to do than playing an organ all day," continued Roy.

"I guess he never thought of that," replied Paul; "then maybe he had no money to pay for it."

"I did n't know you had to pay for abbertisements, Persef. Why, I thought anybody could have one put in for nothing."

They had about five minutes to wait when they arrived at the station. Paul fastened Ben to the post, then they walked to the front platform to watch for the train. Paul stood perfectly still, busy with his thoughts, blinking his eyes very fast, and his little heart under the sailor blouse was actually palpitating with joy in anticipation of the great plan so long talked about, which was now almost realized. He did not pay much attention to Roy, who was talking continuously, laughing and jumping about the platform, too full of animal spirits to keep still even for a moment. Every one turned to look at the two beautiful boys in their sailor suits, with long trousers, Paul's of dark blue, with hat to match, and Roy's of white duck, with bands of blue, and hat of the same. Paul's clear white skin and golden hair were set off to perfection by the dark blue. His face, with its delicately moulded features and an expression full of thoughtfulness and intelligence, invariably attracted the passer-by, while Roy was equally attractive, as he capered about the platform, full of life and mischievousness, his eyes fairly dancing with merriment, his happy nature reflected in every feature of his face and every movement of his body.

"Here it comes! Here it comes!" shouted Roy, as the train made its appearance around a bend. But Paul stood still, his heart beating faster than ever as the train slowed up, and he eagerly scanned the faces of the passengers as they appeared on the platform.

"There they are!" again shouted Roy, pointing to the last car, where Dr. Andrews was helping the blind man down the steps.

Then they both ran to meet them. Paul stepped up to the blind man, and taking his hand said, —

"How are you, Mr. Graves? I am very glad to see you. This is my brother Roy," at which Roy approached, took his extended hand, and eyed him very curiously.

"This is Hester, Paul," said Dr. Andrews; and Paul stepped up immediately to her, and politely held out his hand, which Hester grasped, making a little courtesy at the same time.

"I am very glad to see you too, Hester," said Paul.

Then Dr. Andrews led the way to the carriage, with his arm in that of the blind man's, Paul followed his example and did the same to Hester, thinking she too needed assistance as well as her father, for he noticed immediately how frail she was, and how she limped at every step.

Hester gazed about her in wonder. It was so strange, so wonderful, to have any one willing to go to so much trouble for them, perfect strangers, and so poor and friendless. She appeared to be dazed by it all, as well as her father.

Paul noticed that the organ-grinder's old white high hat had been replaced by a soft brown felt, and that he actually had a collar and neck-tie on.

Every one at the station stood for a moment to watch the strange procession Dr. Andrews was leading to his carriage.

"There goes Dr. Andrews with some of his poor," remarked a lady.

"Yes, and they say little Paul Arlington is as much interested in them as he is," remarked another.

"I hear he is training that little fellow to take his place at some future day," said a gentleman. "Just look how careful he is of that little cripple."

Roy came up in the rear, eying first one, then the other, with the greatest curiosity.

Though Dr. Andrews and the boys talked and laughed all the way home, pointing out the places of special interest, and trying in every possible way to draw the two guests on the back seat into conversation, it seemed almost impossible to do so. Hester only bowed her head in reply, and so did her father; the two sat with hands clasped in each other's, and listened attentively, while Hester looked at the lovely scenery as they rolled along.

Hester thought she never in her life saw such faces as those of the two boys in front of her, and she watched them every time they turned to speak. She had come to the conclusion long ago that the world was a cruel, cold place for the poor to live in; that the rich were all selfish and heartless, and thought only of themselves and their own comfort and pleasures, but her opinion had undergone a decided change now, and she wondered why this boy should have spoken so kindly to her father, and planned such a pleasure for them, and why this gentleman had put himself to so much trouble on their account. When Paul turned to

speak, his face caused the dream of a few nights before to rise up vividly before her. Surely it was very much like the face that she saw then; and was he not leading them now as he did then, away from the narrow dark little world they had lived in, to one which was beautiful, bright, and peaceful?

Once the carriage rumbled over a bridge, and Hester leaned out to look at the pretty fall just above, as it came tumbling down the rocks to the stream beneath. "It is the same stream that runs through our place," he said; "but it is prettier at Beechwood. We have two waterfalls there, and you will see them after a while."

How cool and refreshing was the sound of the splashing waters to the poor tired child, and how lovely it was to look up the stream, and see the wide-spreading trees that interlaced overhead, reminding her of beautiful pictures that she had seen in books, and of dreams she had dreamed, but which she had never before realized.

Little thrills of the keenest pleasure passed through her body as she looked, and felt the influence of it all; and was it any wonder that she could not talk, and that her father too sat motionless? for although he could not see all that Hester was enjoying, he could feel the cool breeze fanning his cheeks, and he could hear the rushing water when they stopped for a moment on the bridge. Then he enjoyed listening to the sweet boyish voices talking gayly, and to the deeper voice of the kind gentleman by their side who was always saying something so interesting.

Dr. Andrews and Paul both knew that their friends were enjoying the drive, and were simply unable to give expression to their joy; but Roy could not read

human nature so readily. He thought it very strange that they did not talk more, and presently he whispered to Paul, "Say, Perseffer, are they deaf and dumb?"

Paul gave him a pinch, bit his lip, and fairly trembled as he turned quickly to see if his guests showed any signs of overhearing this rude remark.

But just then they turned in at the Beechwood gates, and Dr. Andrews said, "This is Beechwood's entrance, Hester," and she leaned out again to behold at last the wonderful fairy-land that she had seen in her dreams, and talked of, ever since Paul had sent the letter and photograph. Was she actually realizing it all, or was she still dreaming? She hardly knew, for it was more lovely than she even had imagined. The pretty lodge nearly hidden in vines, the rolling grounds, the flowers, the broad, smooth avenue, bordered on either side by tall stately trees, — all filled her with raptures.

They were all on the porch to receive them when the carriage drove up; even Aunt Helen condescended to be present.

"I am very glad to see you and welcome you both to Beechwood," said Mrs. Arlington, taking the blind man's hand, then Hester's, without waiting for an introduction. "This is my Grandma Wesley," said Paul to Mr. Graves, slipping his arm in his, and taking a step or two to meet her. She also shook hands, followed by Aunt Helen, and even baby Grace stepped up timidly and placed her wee hand in that of the blind man's for a moment, as Paul said, "This is my sister Grace." She also did the same to Hester, as she saw the rest had done, and said, "I dess you will fink Beechwood is petty 'tause you don't see any fowers or trees in er dreat big city."

Hester smiled at the sweet little face upturned to hers, and said, "Yes, we do think it is very pretty, and I love to look at the trees and flowers."

They were soon all seated on the porch, and Hulda appeared with some light refreshments.

"I am sure you are both somewhat tired after your journey from the city, and perhaps would enjoy a glass of lemonade," said Mrs. Arlington.

They simply thanked her, and Paul, still keeping close beside the blind man, placed the glass securely in his hand.

"Are you fond of the country, Mr. Graves?" asked Aunt Helen.

"Yes, I was always fond of it," replied the old man, in a husky voice; "but it has been years since I've seen as much as a blade of grass. You have all been very kind to us, and the Lord bless you for it all."

"I will leave you both now in charge of the good people here," said Dr. Andrews, addressing the organ-grinder and his daughter, "and I know you will be well taken care of, and given a good time. I will join you again sometime during the afternoon."

They all talked and laughed in a free, easy manner, soon making the blind man and Hester feel perfectly at home, until finally Hester lost all her shyness and talked quite freely with Mrs. Arlington, Grandma, and Aunt Helen by turns, telling them much about her past life, in which Aunt Helen actually found herself becoming very much interested; she was as anxious to hear all that she had to say as the others, though it was very much against her principles to entertain beggars from the street in one's own home, and to encourage a child in such singular notions.

Paul tried to describe Beechwood to the blind man as they sat on the porch, and the places to which he intended taking him shortly. He listened with the gravest attention, occasionally putting forth his hand and stroking fondly the child by his side, as though he was actually in doubt as to whether he were flesh and blood.

"Why didn't you bring your organ?" asked Roy, stepping up close to the old man, and speaking very loudly in his ear, being under the impression that he must be deaf if he was blind.

"They told me to leave it home, little feller," he replied, his countenance never changing from its sad expression.

"Oh, that is all right!" replied Paul, quickly, fearing he might think he had been expected to bring it, after all. "Of course you could n't bring it; so far, and I told you in the letter not to think of it, for then it would n't be different from any other day."

"That's so! that's so!" muttered the old man, shaking his head sorrowfully.

What joy it was to tread once more the cool, green grass; to hear the rustle of the leaves through the branches; to inhale the pure fresh air laden with the scent of fragrant flowers; and, led by a little child, later they slowly wandered through the Beechwood grounds, resting now and then in shady nooks, or sitting on rustic benches by the cool running stream whenever he was the least weary.

It all seemed in a measure to lift the gloom from the old man's clouded mind. He raised his head and looked toward the trees with his sightless eyes when now and then a bird warbled overhead, then toward the dancing waters splashing over the stones at their feet. He could

feel the soft petals of the flowers Paul had placed in his hands, and enjoy their sweet perfume, as he raised them every now and then to his face.

Hester's hands were full of flowers too. They were to her like so many costly jewels. How tenderly she handled them, examining each one closely; it was a great enjoyment to her just to hold them.

"Maybe she would rather have some of the wild ones, and not all tame ones," said Roy.

Afraid that Hester would not understand this remark, Paul began to explain. "He always calls the cultivated flowers in the garden the tame ones, because he said they ought to be called that, if the others are called wild that grow in the woods and by the road." And Paul laughed, and Hester did also, looking into the mischievous little face with eyes brimming over with merriment.

"What does he carry in that bag?" asked Hester of Paul noticing that Roy had carried on his arm an old woven bag like the old-fashioned school-bag, ever since they had started to walk in the grounds.

"Oh, that is his treasure bag!" Paul replied. "He has had it for two years, and nobody knows why he should think so much of it; but for some reason he never tells anybody just why he loves everything in it more than anything he has. And when he goes to bed, he never forgets to hang it on his bed-post.

"Mother says it is so funny, because he is so forgetful about other things; but his treasure bag he never forgets. Whenever he is playing in the grounds he hides it under a bush, and when he is in the house, keeps it in some safe place where he is sure of finding it again. If you ask him, he will show it to you," continued Paul,

seeing Hester was very much interested and amused, and very curious to see its contents; "but please don't laugh or even smile. He does n't care how much he is laughed at about other things, but if any one laughs at his treasure bag, it almost makes him cry; it is the only thing that ever makes him feel like crying."

Hester promised she would not even smile; and the first opportunity that presented itself she said, "Won't you please let me see what you have in your bag, for you must think a dreadful lot of it to carry it around on your arm all the time?"

Roy turned and looked up in her face searchingly, but could discover nothing that indicated she was looking upon it as a very good joke, as he knew so many did whenever his treasure bag was mentioned. It was a conundrum he could not solve, why its contents should cause laughter and ridicule, when to him they were the most precious, the most wonderful and curious things that he had ever seen. Each little treasure had its special attraction for him, which, either from circumstances connected with it, or because in his eyes it was a rare curiosity, made it more or less precious. Occasionally he added some new article to the collection, guarding the whole with the most watchful care.

The entire household soon found that they were obliged to treat the treasure bag with the greatest respect when they learned how extremely sensitive he was when they laughed at it, and when they saw the endless source of pleasure he seemed to derive from it. Every night it hung on his bed-post, and the first thing he did in the morning, on opening his eyes, was to reach for it, and examine each treasure with a new interest.

Once when he was confined to bed with the measles, and his mother and Paul were both ill at the time, a trained nurse was called in to attend him. She was told what a mischievous and active little fellow he was, and that no doubt she would have a time of it to keep him in bed and amused; but at the end of the week she said if it was natural for him to be mischievous and troublesome when perfectly well, he was nevertheless, when ill, the quietest and best-behaved child she had ever nursed. Why, that little bag of treasures would amuse him by the hour, she said, and when he grew tired he would place them all carefully in the bag again, and hang it upon the bed-post, and perhaps an hour afterwards would take them all out again, examining each one separately with apparently as much interest as though he had never seen them before.

When Hester asked to see the contents of the bag, his laughing face immediately assumed a most serious expression, and he gave her one long searching look, eager to ascertain first whether his treasures were to be given proper respect and appreciation before he ran the risk of displaying them.

"Maybe she would like them," he thought, seeing she looked quite serious. Then he said, "If you will sit down here by me on the grass, I will show them to you," which request Hester immediately complied with, and, greatly to Roy's delight, she gave each little treasure as it was brought forth all due appreciation, and one by one he laid them out on the grass for her inspection. Several times she came near laughing, but she managed to control herself and keep a straight face through it all. Some of them were in small boxes, and some in envelopes or wrapped in paper with several

yards of soiled twine wound around them. First he brought out a very small box, and, taking off the lid, handed it to Hester. "This is the greatest curiosity I have," he said. "Just think, it was once in a live man's jaw;" and, sure enough, Hester saw lying in the box a large jaw tooth of a man. He had found it somewhere on the road one day, and thought that he had discovered a great prize. Another small box contained a dead centipede, which was especially attractive on account of its enormous size and the fact that it was killed by himself. Then there was a glass eye, which at one time was worn by the toll-keeper's son up the road, who had met with an accident which so injured one of his eyes that it was found necessary to take it out and insert a false one; but, after wearing it for some time, it was found unsuitable for some reason, and another was obtained. He was showing it to the Arlington children one day, when they stopped to chat a while, as they often did when driving past, and Roy begged him to give it to him, as it seemed in his estimation a most wonderful curiosity.

Then there was an ostrich feather that had once adorned a hat of his mother's, its original color being white, but at present it was gray with dirt and its curl entirely gone, so that it lay as straight and flat as the centipede he had just shown.

After this came a porous plaster that had been worn by Pat for a week on his shoulder-blade for rheumatism. "Just think," he went on, "this funny-looking thing cured an awful pain in Pat's shoulder; and if you have any kind of pains in your body, buy one at the drug store, and it will cure you."

"And this," he said, bringing forth a package wrapped

in a dozen folds of paper, "is a spike that once ran all the way through my cheek when I was playing see-saw. It was in the plank, and I fell on it."

His mother could never forget the day that accident happened; she saw him coming toward the house with his face and clothes stained with blood, and holding his throat as though he were choking. At first she thought something had pierced his throat or he had fallen and cut it. Hulda assisted her in getting him in the house, and washing away the blood, while he told them in a very cool manner that he had "fallen on a spike, that was all." They discovered it had penetrated his cheek to the mouth, and broken off a piece of the jaw tooth, which he pulled out, saying, "What is this wobbling about in my mouth?"

He had looked a little pale at first, but soon he seemed to treat the accident with the utmost indifference, though his mother and Hulda were very much exercised about it, and sent off immediately for a physician, while with lotions and bandages they tried to keep him as quiet as possible until his arrival. His mother walked back and forth from the window anxiously watching for him, when she heard Roy make a queer noise, and thinking perhaps he was strangling with the blood that kept filling his mouth, she rushed to the couch in great alarm, when what was her surprise to see him actually laughing, and, holding the bandage out from his cheek, he said, "I was only trying to see if I could whistle through the hole in my cheek instead of my mouth."

"See this mark?" he said to Hester, pointing to his cheek. "That is where the hole was sewed up." And sure enough, on looking closely, Hester saw a little zig-

zag scar which was not plain enough to make a disfigurement.

After explaining about the spike, he brought out another small box, in which was a lock of his mother's hair, tied with blue ribbon, with a small camphor ball lying on top. "Is n't that pretty hair?" he said. "It does not smell very nice on account of the camphor, but mother said moths eat wool and hair in summer, so I thought I would put that on it to keep them out."

There were a number of other things: a piece of an old suspender worn once by his father, a skeleton of a pet canary, his two pieces of poetry, a small snake he had killed by the creek and stuffed with sand, and, last of all, a fish-bone that had once stuck in his throat, nearly choking him to death. It was carefully wrapped in tissue paper and placed in a box. "Would you ever think," he said, handing it to Hester, "that a little thing like this could ever kill a human being?"

"No, you would n't," replied Hester, trying to keep her face straight.

"Well, it could," went on Roy, "because it nearly killed me. Father said my face was almost black when he pulled it out. My! but I think that is rare curosty, don't you?"

"Yes, I do, and I think they all are very rare and wonderful," said Hester. "And I am very much obliged to you for showing them to me and explaining all about them."

From that moment Roy had the greatest respect for the organ-grinder's lame daughter.

When the dinner hour came, what a sight it was to Hester!

A table was spread under a large shady tree near the

house, and all sat down together, even Grandma and Aunt Helen. And the good things to eat! Hester and her father thought there never would be an end to the dinner. Soup first; then meat and vegetables, ice cream, cake and fruit, and as much fresh milk as one wished to drink.

Roy caused a great deal of amusement during the meal by his original and off-handed talk; he kept Paul in constant anxiety lest he should make some rude personal remark which might hurt the feelings of the two guests. The old man did not seem to understand the meaning of the jokes, for he always wore the same sorrowful expression, never laughing with the others, and Paul thought that he could not be pleased. Hester, on the other hand, was very much amused and entertained by all that was said, and at times she laughed so heartily that it made her feel quite like her old self again.

It was a sad sight to Paul to see the old man eat. His hand trembled so every time that he raised it to his mouth that he wondered how he managed to get the food in.

He was too polite to stare at him, however, and tried with the rest to make them both feel perfectly at ease, but he was so anxious to see that they were properly helped that he scarcely ate anything himself.

"Say, Mr. Graves, which do you like best, pod pie or ice cream?" called Roy from his end of the table, still under the impression that the old man must be deaf, no matter how often he was told otherwise.

Every one laughed at this except the organ-grinder, who seemed not to have noticed the remark, but continued with his meal, his thoughts apparently far away from his surroundings.

"Mr. Graves," again called Roy, "which do you like best, pod pie or ice cream?"

This time the old man laid down his fork and turned in the direction of Roy's voice, and said, "Was the little feller talkin' to me?"

"Yes, it was me over here," screamed Roy, and again he repeated, fairly shouting, "Which do you like best, pod pie or ice cream?"

Before he had a chance to reply, Paul as usual thought it necessary to explain, "He means pot pie, Mr. Graves. He is very fond of chicken pot pie, and always calls it pod pie. He says he likes it better than ice cream, and thinks it very strange because I don't."

"Yes! yes! that is so. I like ice cream best, little feller," said the old man, absently, appearing after the explanation not to see where the fun came in.

"Yes, the Perseffer says he likes ice cream best too, but I don't," said Roy; "and he likes post eggs, but I would n't eat one for a bank of money. I only like them shambled. Which way do you like eggs, Mr. Graves?"

"Yes! yes! I like eggs very well," said the old man.

Roy was silenced after this for a time by something whispered in each ear by his grandmother on one side and his mother on the other.

By the time dinner was over, Hester and her father were well acquainted with the family at Beechwood, and were greatly refreshed by the bountiful and well-cooked meal.

Shortly afterwards they were escorted to the creek for a row; this had been left for the afternoon's entertainment. Grandma, Aunt Helen, and Mrs. Arlington,



ALICE & MARGARET.

having other duties that required their attention, left Paul and Hulda in charge of the guests.

Paul and Roy rowed the blind man and his daughter, while in a smaller boat Hulda took Grace and Nero. There was no danger of drowning in that part of the stream, even should the boats capsize.

"I love this part of Beechwood best of all," said Paul. "I could stay here all day and never get tired."

"Oh, it is so beautiful," said Hester. "I have never seen anything like it before in all my life. I wish you could see it all too, Father;" and she gazed sorrowfully at her poor father's bent figure as he sat with clasped hands quiet and listless.

"I am so glad that my Hester is happy, and that she can see," he said.

The green branches met over their heads, forming a leafy bower as they slowly glided along. The wild flowers and ferns grew in profusion on either side of them. The water was so clear in places, the little minnows could be seen gambolling about, and Hester put out her hand and passed it through the cooling stream as the little boat glided along.

"The ferns are prettier just above here," said Paul. "I will get out and pick you a large bunch if you would like them. They can be pressed and hung on the wall of your room."

"Oh, please do! I would so like to have them. When the flowers die I shall still have them to look at," said Hester.

She kept turning her eyes first on one side, then on the other, fearing to miss the smallest part of the scenery surrounding her, and she wondered if heaven could be more beautiful.

"Perseffer, sing your sailor song now, that you made," said Roy, suddenly thinking of it, and that it was the appropriate time.

"Oh, please do," said Hester, eagerly.

"Yes, sing, children, sing!" said the old man, in a trembling voice. "Your mother used to sing, Hester child, years ago. She was so happy then, before the dark days came." His voice grew quite husky, and he again resumed his motionless attitude as his thoughts went back to those happy days when everything was bright in the world to him. He could see his cosey cottage home, and the happy face of his young wife coming down the garden path to meet him after his day's work, with baby Hester in her arms, who was always transferred to his at the gate, cooing and prattling after the baby fashion.

"Go on," said Roy; "why don't you sing, Persef?"

Paul did not immediately comply, because he was thinking of the blind man and the sad words he had just spoken, "Before the dark days came."

"I guess he means before he was blind, and it has always been dark to him ever since," thought Paul.

Poor man! he spoke so seldom and when he did, it was in such a mournful manner it was enough to touch a heart much less susceptible than little Paul Arlington's.

Hester was waiting eagerly, watching him intently; then he began, and Roy and Grace joined in:

"We're the jolliest sailor boys on the sea,
Just as merry as we can be,
All day singing a happy song
As we gayly roll along.

“Ho-ho ! Ho-ho ! we’re the jolliest sailor boys,
Roaming always o’er the sea,
Just as gay as we can be.
Ho-ho ! Ho-ho ! we’re the jolliest sailor boys.

“Oh, come take a sail o’er the deep blue sea
And be like us, so gay and free,
Rolling, tossing, night and day.
’T is the merriest life, I say.

“Ho-ho ! Ho-ho ! we’re the jolliest sailor boys, etc.

“Oh, Roy and Nero, Grace and me,
Are the sailors on this rolling sea.
Its name I know you’d never dream :
’T is the beautiful Beechwood stream.

“Ho-ho ! Ho-ho ! we’re the jolliest sailor boys, etc.”

Clearer and clearer rang the voices, fuller and sweeter, keeping time with the oars as they sang, making a trio of sweet childish voices, with Paul’s in the lead.

The merry song roused the old man from his sad reveries, and he actually smiled and rubbed his sightless eyes, as though making desperate efforts to penetrate the gloom, and behold if only for an instant the faces of the little singers.

Hester sat spellbound, watching Paul’s face as he rowed and sang.

“Oh, that was so pretty !” she said, when the song was finished. “Won’t you please sing again ?”

“Sing your creek song,” said Roy. “He made that all himself too, and Dr. Andrews thinks it fine.”

“Made it all yourself ?” exclaimed Hester, more and more astonished. “Oh, please sing it !”

Then Paul began immediately, —

The Story of a Little Poet

“Gliding, gliding, down the Beechwood stream
With never a thought of sadness,
In the bright sunbeams,
Oh, merrily, merrily, down we go
With oars bending to and fro.

“Flowers, flowers blooming on every side,
Filling the air with sweet perfume,
Nodding to us as we glide,
Oh, gayly, gayly down we go
With oars bending to and fro.”

“Sweet birds, sweet birds, singing everywhere,
Filling our hearts with gladness,
With their melodies rare,
Oh, cheerily, cheerily, down we go,
With oars bending to and fro.

“Gently, gently, o’er the wavelets small
Over the mossy stones beneath,
Under the trees so tall,
Oh, gleefully, gleefully, down we go
With oars bending to and fro.”

Roy and Grace did not join in this time, so Paul’s voice was heard in all its beauty and sweetness. Hester never moved, and as before sat like one spellbound.

Her dream of a few nights before loomed up vividly before her again as she listened and watched the sweet singer.

More than ever his face seemed to resemble the one she had seen in her dream, and there were the flowers and the trees, all just the same, only the miracle had not been wrought and her father’s sight had not been restored.

“Thank you ! thank you so much ! It was beauti-

ful," she said, with tears actually glistening in her eyes when he had finished.

"I will sing for you again sometime if you like it so much," said Paul. "But here we are in fernland. Just look, is n't it like a fairy world?"

They all got out, and the two boys assisted the blind man to a rustic seat, while the others gathered ferns for Hester's room. Hester too joined them, laughing and talking with the children, as happy as they, forgetting for the time all her sorrows, all her aches and pains, and the little hot garret room in the far off crowded city.

Only too rapidly for Hester passed this wonderful day, with all its new pleasures.

When returning from the creek, they met Dr. Andrews in the Beechwood grounds, and Paul was delighted; he could scarcely hide his feelings, for he knew the time was now at hand for the doctor to tell Mr. Graves and Hester of the plans that they had made for their future, and of the new and pleasant home where they were to be taken that very day.

How glad they will be when they hear it, he thought, and he fairly trembled with delight when he heard Dr. Andrews tell Hulda to take Roy and Grace up to the house. Then they sat on the rustic garden seats, and Dr. Andrews said, —

"I have something to say to you, Mr. Graves, so let us rest here a while."

"Yes, yes," said the old man, shaking his head.

"Would you not prefer to live in the country altogether instead of returning to the hot city to sit all day on the streets?" began Dr. Andrews.

"Ah, that would be all I would desire for my child,"

replied the blind man. "But it can't be done, sir, it can't be done," he repeated, shaking his head again in the usual mournful manner.

"But if I tell you there is a good home waiting for you both, where you will not have to work any more until you get strong and well, and where you both will have the best of care, would you hesitate to go?"

"What do you say, sir?" exclaimed the old man, growing quite excited. "A home for my Hester where she will be taken care of?"

"Exactly," replied Dr. Andrews. "But not only Hester, but where you will be taken care of too, and where we hope to see you soon strong and well."

"Oh, sir, can it be true? can it be true?" said the organ-grinder, trembling all over for very joy at such a prospect.

"A home for my Hester? A home for my Hester?" he repeated, wiping the tears from his eyes while he spoke. "She will not starve, then, if I go, will she, sir, my poor little Hester child?" His voice trembled, and he put out his hand to touch his kind benefactor, while with the other he pressed his forehead as though striving to realize it all.

His emotion was pitiful to see as he strove through it all to express his gratitude.

Paul and Dr. Andrews both knew that there was no need for words to express his appreciation and joy.

"Sometimes there's a cloud here," he said, touching his head. "All seems far off, not real, not real! But this is true, sir, is it not? Tell me again, kind sir, so I cannot forget. A home for my Hester child when I die, did you say?"

"Yes, a good home for your child, Mr. Graves; it is

all absolutely true, every word ; but I want you to thank my little friend here, for it was his suggestion that brought it all about ; he has done it all ! ”

“ Oh, the blessed boy ! the blessed child ! ” said the old man, scarcely able to speak for the very sobs that filled his throat, and reaching out his hand for Paul, who arose and stood close beside him, while he stroked the golden hair and patted him on the shoulder, muttering incoherently all the while. Then he said more distinctly, “ You will take care of my little girl, won’t you, so that she will not starve ? ”

“ Yes, I will take good care of her,” replied Paul, his own voice trembling with emotion, for it had been a very pathetic sight to see and listen to the blind man.

“ We will always take care of her at the Home,” continued Paul, getting more command of his voice. “ And you are not going to die, Mr. Graves. You will soon get well and strong when you get in your new home ; ” and Paul rested his hand affectionately on his shoulder, while the old man’s arm found its way around his body, and he drew Paul closer to him, till again as once before when they first met, the gold and white locks mingled together.

“ Not for long ! not for long ! ” muttered the old man, shaking his head as though he could find no encouragement in Paul’s words so far as he was personally concerned.

All through this conversation Hester sat as one dazed, drinking in every word with fast-beating heart, staring first at one, then at the other, unable at first to comprehend it all.

Could it be possible that this wonderful day was the

introduction to many more just as wonderful as this one had been to her? Like her father, she thought there must be some mistake: she surely could not have heard aright, and it was not until her father had been assured several times of its being absolutely true, and not until she also heard Paul confirm it all, and say to her father, "No, she will not starve; we will always take care of her at the Home, and you are not going to die, Mr. Graves; you will soon be well when you get in your new home," did she fully realize the great change in her life. Then she suddenly arose, and with tears rushing from her eyes and down her cheeks she threw herself in her father's arms, and sobbed on his shoulder.

It was her father's sad words that affected her most, after all; for what pleasure would it all be to her, she thought, if he could not live to enjoy it, and as soon as she could get command of her voice, she said, —

"Oh, Father dear, do not talk of leaving me. I have only you left in the whole world, and how could I be happy if you leave me now. Won't you try to get well for my sake? Won't you?" she repeated, awaiting an answer, smoothing his haggard face and looking at him through her tears imploringly, apparently unconscious for the moment of the presence of Dr. Andrews and Paul.

Her father held her tightly and only shook his head sorrowfully in answer to her pleadings.

"Perhaps after a while the pain will leave your head," she went on, "and you will be as well as you were years ago. Now won't you try, Father?"

"Yes, you surely will make an effort for your child's sake to cheer up, won't you, Mr. Graves?" asked Dr.

Andrews. "It will make her so happy, and you have nothing to do now but to try to get well and forget all your past sorrows. Think only of her, and think how glad it will make her to see you make an effort to feel happy too, and try to dispel all gloomy thoughts entirely from your mind."

"I will try, Hester child, I will try," he finally said, patting her as one would an infant.

He had been greatly affected by this outburst on Hester's part, as also were Dr. Andrews and Paul, for she was a quiet child, and it was not her disposition to show her feelings by any outward demonstration.

So it was settled. Glenwood Home henceforth was to be the home of the organ-grinder and Hester.

Paul had the pleasure of accompanying them there, with Dr. Andrews.

All the family came out to see them off, and with many good wishes bade Paul's guests good-by.

They drove away, almost buried in flowers, which Paul had placed in their laps and at their feet; some of them were tied in great bunches, and others were piled in baskets in rich profusion, for Paul had promised Hester that she should take away with her as many as she could carry. They actually looked bright and happy as they rolled along under the wide-spreading trees. The sun was just sinking in the west, leaving behind it brilliant rays of shaded gold and red, which cast a mellow light over the landscape.

A gentle breeze sprang up with the dying day, laden with odors of pine and cedar, most refreshing to the weary father and child, who sat together on the back seat, hand in hand, as they did in the morning on their way to Beechwood. Too happy to speak, again to

Hester it all seemed like a continuation of that beautiful dream; and there, too, was her dream child, leading them always to something beautiful; and the dark and gloomy world that her father and she had just left was fast fading away with the setting sun.

CHAPTER XII

A LETTER, received at Beechwood from Chicago one morning, caused a great stir and commotion.

Mr. Arlington had found a suitable home for his family, and urged them to leave Beechwood as soon as possible. Hulda was sent on ahead to get the house cleaned, and to arrange the furniture which had already been forwarded. Only the plainest and most substantial had been selected for their future home, — furniture which should be suitable for the smaller house they intended to occupy, and the simple manner in which they expected to live.

Hulda was to be their only maid, and declared that she was willing to work her finger-ends off before she would leave Mrs. Arlington and the children, to whom she was greatly attached.

One evening at twilight Mrs. Arlington, Grandma, and Aunt Helen were seated around a low fire in the grate, for the nights were becoming somewhat chilly. They were talking of Paul and how wonderfully he had striven to overcome the great sorrow of parting with Beechwood.

“He is a born philosopher, as well as a little poet and a philanthropist,” said Grandma. “The way he has of planning and studying out things is wonderful for one so young. He told me the other day that whenever he thought of the sad life of the organ-grinder and

his child, and also poor Irish Moll, he felt ashamed of himself to think that he should feel the least unhappy because he had to leave Beechwood.

"‘I will just try as hard as I can, Grandma,’ he said, ‘not to think about it at all, but just of all the poor people in the world, who live like Moll did, and Mr. Graves and Hester, and who never get enough to eat, or never see a flower, or the woods and fields.’”

"Well! I only hope, for one, that he will find no beggars near your new home," remarked Aunt Helen, addressing Mrs. Arlington; "it is no wonder to me that he does not get strong and robust like Roy, when he is wearing himself out sympathizing with every beggar he sees, and carrying all their burdens on his shoulders."

"It surely has done him no harm to carry out his little plan for the organ-grinder and his child," said Mrs. Arlington. "It has actually been of great benefit to him, because in seeing their forlorn condition, and sympathizing with them, he could not help but appreciate his more fortunate position, and feel, even with the absence of Beechwood, how bright and different was his life from theirs."

"I must still confess that I do not see where it has been of any benefit to him," persisted Aunt Helen.

"It is just because you do not understand him, and so are not able to see it," replied Mrs. Arlington.

"I am afraid I shall never be able to understand him just as you both do," continued Aunt Helen; "for nothing could ever convince me that it can be beneficial to any child to be forever following up organ-grinders and pedlars, and listening to their tales of woe."

"He is not always doing so," said Mrs. Arlington. "And, after all, it is only that he is intensely sympa-

thetic, and cannot help noticing all the poor miserable creatures he sees. But remember, Helen dear, he is still only a little child, and this trait will not be so noticeable as he grows older. I would not for a moment think of allowing him to be always devoting himself to charitable works, and simply consented to let him do as he chose in this case because it has been a means of taking his thoughts from himself. It is not likely that he will come in contact with many such people in the suburb where his new home will be."

"Well, if he did I would most certainly put my foot down and not let him interest himself in them," said Aunt Helen, very emphatically; she could not, or would not, be convinced of anything else but that it was all foolishness to encourage her little nephew in any of his notions about the poor.

"I have no fears for him whatever," said Mrs. Arlington. "These notions, as you call them, are only the expressions of a little heart tender and sympathetic. I will call the children in now," she continued, rising and walking out of the room. "The air is chilly; besides, I want them to write their last letters to their father before going to bed."

Mr. Arlington's health had not improved since he left home, but he had not mentioned it to his family in his letters. A troublesome cough had developed, causing him to lose much sleep and to feel tired and weary on arising in the mornings. Frequently he felt much discouraged when he found that instead of gaining, now that all business troubles had practically ended, he seemed only to continue losing in strength and flesh, and so very naturally he looked for letters from home as his greatest comfort and pleasure. Those from his

three little darlings were greatly enjoyed, affording him much amusement; they were full of innocent childlike talk, yet entirely different in their tone and character, and true to the nature of the three children.

It was a task for Roy to settle himself down to letter-writing, but his mother always insisted that he and Grace should send a letter to their father twice a week as well as Paul.

Grace, of course, was not able to write, but she would stand by her mother and tell her what to say, and Mrs. Arlington wrote just as she expressed it, thinking it would amuse her father, as well as seem more natural.

It was a pleasure to Paul to write to his father; "It is just like having a nice little talk all to ourselves," he said.

"Now take pains, children," said Mrs. Arlington, as all three were in readiness. "Make these the best letters of all." Roy could not yet be trusted with ink, so he had to be satisfied with a lead pencil, which regularly caused an argument that had to be settled satisfactorily before he began.

Paul's letter ran thus: —

MY DEAR FATHER, — It seems stranger and stranger every day for you to be so far away, but we tried hard to get used to it, because we had to; but now we have only a short time to stay away from you, and we are all so glad.

Mother missed you very much, for when she thought no one was looking, I saw a little sad look in her eyes, and I knew she was thinking of you so far away. I try to make her cheerful, because I am sad myself sometimes, and I know what it is. I mean I *have* been sad, but not now; because ever since I became acquainted with Mr. Graves, Hester, and Moll, whom I told you about, I can't be.

I hope we will find you well and fat, and not worrying any more about those dreadful men who owed you money ; but perhaps they did n't know any better, and could n't help it. When they get some, I guess they'll pay it back. Do you think I could help you in your business when I'm a man? I was thinking about being a minister and making homes for the poor ; but a boy ought to help his father first, ought n't he? Maybe I can do both.

Beechwood looks beautiful now, only everything seems to be saying good-by. The flowers, the leaves, the water, all seem to be nodding at me every time I pass them ; good-by, good-by, they all are saying, and so now I must say good-by to you until we meet to be with you always.

Your dear son,

PAUL.

When Roy finished his, and handed it to his mother for her approval, she laughed until she cried, and then gave it to Grandma and Aunt Helen. Roy was not aware of the amusement that his letter caused, as he had skipped off as soon as his mother took the letter ; but even if he had been present, he would not have minded it, as he was not at all sensitive, and whenever they laughed at anything he said or did, it rather pleased him than otherwise.

His letter ran thus :

MY DEAR FATHER,—How r you i wood like to get out thare soon to giv you a gude kis is it nice out thare i hope you hav jolly fun i hav lots did i tell you i joined the soldjers club after you went away the club of nites of pity us i went up to here the banders play every day the musick was fine the horners fases got orful red wen they blowd them i thote some times they wood esplode the drums beet so lowd it made my heart go up and down in my stummick and o i dont no wat to say to tell you how fine it wus r you makin mutch money out

thare ile be out soon and then ile help you pe nut stands are gude things for money caus every boty bies can dudzes make mutch money if they cant why then the purseffor will be poor caus he is 1 we r all as gude as we can be and never do anything bad from your remaining son Roy of the nite of pity us club. i forgot to tell you i made this pickchure of r dazy dont you think its good.

The following is baby Grace's letter as she dictated it to her mother:—

MY DEAR DOOD FARVER, — I am now yiting my letter to you, only Murver puts it down. I was sorry you went away ; but I 'm glad now 'tause I 'm dawn to see you soon adain. Did you read in er noose paper 'bout Baby Martin dawn to heaven? 'Ey had a petty white shash tied on er doorbell to tell er peoples she had dawn. It was dreadful sadful day, but Bruver Paul say she is n't sad the least a bit, 'tause she is in heaven, an' 'at 's why the reason no little dirls are sad there ; but her poor farver and murver are awsul sad, 'tause 'ey has to stay here wivout her. I send you 'ots and 'ots of hugs and kisses from your baby,

GRACE.

After Paul had sealed and directed his letter, he seated himself comfortably in his favorite chair with a book which he had been reading for some time, "The Life of Washington," written expressly for children, and having many illustrations. Paul had become greatly interested in it, and would have finished it long before this, had he been permitted to read whenever and as long as he desired. Roy and Grace knew about as much of the contents of the book as Paul did, for he generally, at bedtime, related to them all he had read during the day ; and for several weeks they had heard such wonderful things about George Washington, the father of our country, that Roy was beginning to think that he was

more than a mortal, and that there could never be any one who could compare with him in goodness and greatness. To read of his death, after he had followed him through his whole life, made Paul feel very sad. "And to think that it was caused only by a little cold that settled in his throat from going out on a damp day," he thought, as he closed the book, and gazed into the grate fire. "If he had only stayed at home that day, he might have lived for years."

All three children generally went to bed about the same time. Paul and Roy slept in single beds, side by side, while baby Grace occupied a room communicating. The door was always open between, and the three held nightly conversations before falling off to sleep.

Frequently they took turns in telling stories which were very funny and interesting to listen to. Paul generally found, when it was his turn, that he had been talking only to himself for some time, as Roy and Grace had fallen off to sleep before he had half finished, and they often did this while in the very midst of telling their own stories.

"I have finished the book at last," said Paul, after they were in bed and left alone, "and George Washington is dead."

"Dead!" exclaimed Roy, "how did he get dead, Perseffer? Tell us all about it!"

"'Es, tell us all 'bout how George Watchinton dot dead in er book!" called Grace from the next room.

"Well, this was just how it was: he went out one very damp day to see how things were getting along on his farm, and he took cold, and it made his throat swell, so he could n't eat, and of course when you can't eat, you can't live."

"Oh, I 'm awsul sorry he dot 'at bad cold. I fink his murver ought to made him stay home when it was damp."

"Pshaw! what are you talking about, Grace? Men ain't little babies," said Roy. "They do as they please. He had to go out in the snow and rain, and walk in deep water when he had the wars going, and even sleep out on the ground. He was getting old, I guess, and it was time for him to die."

"Who do you think was the bravest, Persef, George Washington or God?" he asked in the same breath.

"Oh, that's a different thing altogether what is n't on the subject," said Paul, quite indignant at such a comparison.

"Oh, 'at's a difrent fing altodedder what is n't er sub-jet," repeated Grace after Paul, as she generally did during his discussions with Roy, because Paul always knew everything, and what he said was always right.

"I don't think it is a different thing altogether," said Roy, notwithstanding there were now two to one. "God's a father of a country, is n't he? and so is George Washington the father of a country."

"Well, that's different, I tell you," persisted Paul. "God is father of heaven and earth, and George Washington was just called the father of this country while he was here, because he won the battles and made us free."

"'Es, 'at's what he is," chimed in baby Grace: "Dod is Dod, farver of heaven, an' George Watchinton is farver of our tountry."

"Well, I don't care, I like my old Knight of Pityus Captain better than George Washington, anyhow," said Roy. "He has a fine name, too, Alexander Kaufman;

and if he had been living when George Washington was, he would have beaten him all to nothing. Just think how grand that would sound, — Alexander Kaufman, the father of our country.”

“I don’t want Alazander Tauffin to be the farver of my tountry,” said Grace, on the verge of tears. “I don’t fink ’at name is a sinle bit petty. I jes only like my George Watchinton.”

“I don’t see how you could like that name,” said Paul. “It would always put me in mind of a coffin. Now just listen to this, George Wash-ing-ton, how grand and fine that sounds. I don’t care if you tried for a year, you could n’t find a better name than that.”

“No, you toodent, and ’at’s why the reason I want him for the farver of my tountry,” said Grace.

“Well, I don’t care, I think I like my Alexander better, anyhow,” said Roy. “I always stick up for him. It’s your turn to tell a story to-night, Grace,” he continued, suddenly changing the subject.

“Is it? Well, en I will tell you one yight away.

“’Ere was once upon a time a dreat big tountry wiv good peoples in it, when one day some bad peoples tum along and say ’ey were dawn to take it away from ’em, an’ ’ey did n’t know what to do, so one day a dreat big kind dood man tum along, an’ he say to all er peoples, Don’t be ’fraid ’tause I’m dawn to knock all ’ese bad peoples down dead, an’ keep our tountry for ourselves, and I won’t let ’em hurt you, and en er bad peoples ran away, and some were killed dead, an—er dood—man—was—George—Watchinton—and not—Al-a-zan-der—Tauf—”

A little sigh, and Grace was in dreamland, where Roy had already entered, while the little poet and philosopher still lay awake, smiling at baby Grace’s story, and think-

ing how funny it was to hear her voice grow lower and lower, and the words come with a gap between each syllable, until finally they stopped altogether. Soon he, too, was asleep, and the three little chattering tongues were silenced for the night.

There was so much to think about, and also so much to be done these last days at Beechwood, that Paul's mind and time were completely taken up. He did not have a chance very often to be entirely alone, and so taken up was he with other matters that he did not fully realize just how near he was to parting with his beautiful home forever. He had many talks with Pat, who had become quite cheery over the fact that the gentleman who purchased Beechwood had engaged him with most of the other hands to remain on the place in his service. It was a great comfort to Paul to know that Pat would be looked after.

"When I come on to visit Dr. Andrews," he said, "I will step over to see you every day, Pat, and we'll pretend I am living here, and it is still my home, won't we?"

"Indade, and we will, me bye, and Oi knows yez will niver forgit yer old Pat, who 's played wid yez iver since yez was born, and yer father afore yez.

"I never could forget you, Pat, no matter how long I live, and, besides, I'm going to take care of you when I'm a man, you know."

"Bless yer tinder heart, me bye. Oi belave yez would, fer yez was always thrue to yez word."

Paul had also many talks with Dr. Andrews, and with many of the neighbors, on whom he called to bid good-by.

He tried to be very brave whenever he was asked if he thought he would miss Beechwood.

"Oh, of course I shall miss it," he would say, with his eyelids blinking fast, and a little tremor in his voice. "Because when your home was yours, your father's, your grandfather's, and your great-grandfather's, it takes a long while to get used to thinking it's some one else's all of a sudden."

There were so many calls to make that they alone took up a great deal of his time, for there was no one in Arlington Heights he did not know, or in whom he was not more or less interested.

One morning he was alone, walking by the creek with a very solemn countenance, when he met Roy.

"Hello, Persef, what is the matter? Got a pain anywhere?" he asked, noting how very serious he looked.

"No, I have n't any pains," said the little philosopher, solemnly. "I was only thinking about the insect cemetery. I am going up there now to bid it good-by, because maybe I won't get a chance to see it again before we go away."

"I'll go with you, Persef, for maybe I won't get another chance either. We had jolly fun with that cemetery, did n't we?"

Paul turned toward him a look of reproof at this, but said nothing. Roy understood it, however.

"Oh, I don't mean jolly fun, Persef, I only just mean we had nice times — I mean it was nice, you know, to bury all those poor dead bugs we found, and make nice graves for them, so they could be buried like human beings. Why, Persef, we haven't had a funeral this summer; what is the reason?"

"Well, you see, I am getting too big now to play those bug funerals like I used to when I was a little boy; but it was all real to me then, Roy, and I did n't do it for fun.

I felt just as badly when we buried those poor bugs," continued Paul (as they now stood by the cemetery gazing at the little mounds), "as if they had been real people."

"Yes, I know you did, Persef, because I used to see tears in your eyes sometimes, but I could not cry a speck over an old insect. I used to try, though, at the funerals, 'cause I thought you would n't like it if I did n't, so sometimes I just tickled my nose with a little twig, and that would make the tears come; but then you know I was only a little child," went on Roy (as Paul gave him a look of surprise and disgust), "and was n't sensible yet."

"I hate to think of leaving it forever," said Paul, with his hands clasped. "You know things you had when you were little children somehow you always want to have. I am glad I wrote down in a book all about them, for when I want to remember the cemetery, I will just get out the book, and I can read about every bug that is buried in it, and the names we gave them."

"I'll tell you what we can do," suddenly exclaimed Roy, full of animation.

"What?" said Paul.

"Why, just dig them all up, put them in a box, and take them in your trunk to our new home, and make a cemetery there for them, and then you'll never have to part with them, Persef."

"Oh, no! I would n't like that," said Paul, decidedly, shaking his head. "If I were dead and buried, I would never want any one to take up my bones which were quietly going to dust. I'll leave them to rest in peace; besides, they are sad things to have, Roy, and I don't think I will ever make any more. I can always bury

anything dead I find, but I won't make a regular cemetery like this."

"That's so, Persef. Course they are sad things to have. Don't let's have any kind of sad things in our new home. Let's have jolly things like parades, war fights, pretend bull fights, and have Nero for the bull. Let's have lots of bonfires on 'lection nights, shooting crackers and sky-rockets on Fourth of July, and let's have picnics and go to parties and circuses; and you have a jolly face on you, Persef, all the time, and never your worried one any more, and don't ever make another poetry verse as long as you live, then you'll be a jolly good feller."

Paul never smiled at all this; he was gazing all the time at the rows of little mounds before him, wondering how long the fence would last they had made around its three sides, the fourth being enclosed by a large rock, and if Pat would look after it occasionally if he asked him.

For two years the little cemetery had been of great interest to the two boys, especially to Paul. Whenever a dead bug was found, bird or butterfly, they would immediately have a funeral. A little tin wagon was used as a hearse, draped around with a piece of black material. The corpse would be placed in a box in the hearse, on top of which always rested a flower of some kind. A long stout string was attached to the hearse, and slowly they hauled it to the cemetery in a secluded nook up the creek. It was laid out in rows of graves, with paths between wide enough for the hearse to pass through. Each grave had a head and foot stone, or at least a head and foot board, on which Paul had written in ink each one's name and the date of its burial.

Here is a sample of an inscription: —

BILLY — THE BETLE
FOUND 5 OF JUNE AND
BERRIED THAT SAME DAY
MUST OF BIN KILED IN WAR
FOR HIS LEGS AND WINGS WERE GONE
HE MUST HAV BIN BRAVE TO FITE SO HARD.

Here is another: —

LILY THE BUTTER FLY YELLER AND BLACK
KILD BY ROY WHO GAVE IT A WACK
AS IT FLEW CLOSE BESIDE HIM ON THE SECOND OF MAY
WHICH FOR IT WAS OF COURSE ITS VERY LAST DAY.

“Come on, Persef, let’s go. I think we’ve said good-by long enough,” said Roy; and with one wistful look and a sigh Paul turned, and they both walked away.

Just at present there was one particular event Paul was looking forward to in which he was more interested than anything else. It was a lawn concert to be given at Glenwood Home the day before Paul left Beechwood. What made it especially interesting to him was the fact of it being an outcome of an idea of his very own, which he had spoken of to Dr. Andrews some months before, and of which that gentleman thought very favorably, and had promised Paul he would look into it when the summer came.

“Don’t you think it would be a good thing for the Home children if we could have some music for them,” he had said. “I think it makes people good to listen to good music, just as it does to listen to a good sermon. Why, when I am listening to sweet music, Doctor, the world looks more beautiful to me somehow, and

when I've had any troubles, I forget all about them, so I think the Home children might feel that way too. I guess everybody loves music, don't you think so?"

"I cannot imagine a nature that would actually dislike it," replied the doctor, who had listened attentively, it being the first time he had ever heard Paul speak of its beautiful influence upon himself.

Dr. Andrews remembered this conversation and Paul's suggestion, and thought now was the time to act. He should have the pleasure of attending the first concert given for the Home children, which would be held on the lawn, and the beginning of a series that would follow as long as the weather would permit. Then music of an appropriate kind should be obtained for indoors at intervals during the winter months. So when he told Paul the musicians had been engaged for concerts at Glenwood Home, and the first would come off the day before he left, his joy knew no bounds, and he talked of nothing else.

Almost every day he drove over to Glenwood with Dr. Andrews to talk it over with the managers, the matron, and children; in fact, with every one who was the least interested.

There was one drawback, however, in his mind to the concert being a perfect success, and that was the illness of the organ-grinder and Hester, which would most likely prevent them from being present and enjoying it with the others, even if they would be able to hear the music from their rooms.

No visitors were allowed in the sick rooms, with the exception of Dr. Andrews, so Paul had not seen either of them since their admittance. Dr. Evans had ordered them to bed immediately, and said that Hester

might be coaxed back to enjoy once again at least fair health, but for her father he thought there could be nothing done. They would try at least to make his last days comfortable as possible. They did not tell Hester, however, that her father's case was a hopeless one, and neither did they tell little Paul Arlington; both Hester and he thought that he was put to bed simply for the rest and to gradually gain strength by proper nourishment and care.

CHAPTER XIII

IT was understood throughout Arlington Heights and Glenwood that a concert was to be given for the Home children, which would also be in honor of Paul Arlington before he went away, for every one knew how much he was thought of by the little inmates ; he was a regular visitor, and very much interested in everything connected with the Home.

A great gathering was therefore expected on the lawn. Circulars had been distributed inviting all to come and enjoy the music ; these stated that this concert was to be the first of a series that would continue indefinitely, and that these concerts had been brought about by the suggestion of one of the little friends and workers of the Home, who had brought to it three inmates entirely through his own exertions.

When at last the day arrived, it happened to be a very warm and sultry one. The roads were dry and dusty, being very much in need of rain. Paul, though, did not pay much attention to such little things as these. The sun was shining, and that was sufficient in his mind to make the day a success.

"Although we are so much in need of rain, I am glad for your sake, Paul, it is keeping off at least a day longer," remarked Dr. Andrews, as Paul and he were driving along the dusty road toward Glenwood to assist in the final preparations for the garden *fête* in the afternoon.

"The first thing I thought of this morning was to look for the sun," said Paul, "because if it rained the band could not play unless it went inside, and it would be too loud for indoor music, and the people would n't come, and the Home children could n't have their refreshment table out under the trees, and I would n't be here for the next one."

"It would certainly have been a great disappointment to many besides yourself, if it had been a rainy day. I only hope the fair weather will continue, but this sultry condition is often a forerunner of thunderstorms," said Dr. Andrews.

"I am sorry the poor old blind man will not be able to come down, but maybe he will the next time. They think Hester will be strong enough to sit on the porch for a while, and I shall be very glad to see her again. I do believe this is the happiest day I have had in my life," went on Paul, in his earnest way, looking up in Dr. Andrews's face with his own fairly beaming with joy. It did not occur to him for a moment of what the next day would bring; but Dr. Andrews was thinking then how much he would miss his little companion and pupil, and of the pleasant drives and walks they so frequently took together.

A number of the Home children were at the gate watching for them when they arrived. These two were the most welcome and loved of all visitors there.

No lessons were to be studied that day, and only the regular household work was done.

The children surrounded the carriage as it drove up to the door.

"Oh, come and see our tables!" said one, referring to two tables at the end of the large halls, on which

were displayed articles of various kinds, made by the children. It had always been a custom on visiting days to display these little articles for sale, the money, of course, going in the Home fund.

A great many visitors being expected on this particular day, they thought it a good opportunity to make an unusual number of sales, and so displayed all that they had. This was done partly to give each child a feeling of independence. It was good for them to feel that they were doing something for the support of the Home, and were helping in a measure to make some return for the comforts they enjoyed, and the instruction and care given them.

"Oh, come and see all the plants that have been sent to decorate," said one of the children, as all grouped around Paul as he alighted, eager to lead him off and have the pleasure of being first to show what had been done since his previous visit.

"I will look around the grounds first, and see if they are all right," said Paul.

"Oh, yes, they are all right," said little Irish Moll at his elbow, looking bright and happy, her pinched face filled out roundly, and the starved, frightened look entirely gone. "See," she continued, "all these benches were brought this morning for the people that are coming."

"What a good idea!" said Paul, shaking his head in his old-fashioned way, looking from right to left as he slowly walked over the grounds.

"I wonder if the platform is very strong," he said when it came in view, having been just put up under some shady trees expressly for the band. He stood looking at it critically, holding his head first on one side,

then on the other, then stooping to look underneath for a close inspection of its foundation. "Yes, I think that is a good strong platform," was his final opinion, "and I never saw the grounds look so beautiful."

"The gardener has been putting them in order for three days. The grass is all freshly cut, and every speck is picked up from the walks. We would n't drop even a crumb on them now, would we, Sam?" said a little fellow, addressing his chum by his side.

"Indeed, we would n't; we've all been helping to get it in fine order," replied Sam.

"Ah! Here you are now," said Mrs. Fleming, the matron, stepping from the door as Paul approached. "I have been waiting for your advice in regard to all the plants and flowers that have been sent by kind neighbors for decorating. You know you are Master of Ceremonies to-day, and must be consulted in all things."

"Oh, thank you," said Paul, with a little laugh, raising his hat at the same time, though he hardly understood what Master of Ceremonies meant. But she had waited to consult him about the flowers, and that was very kind in her, he thought.

They all knew his love for them and his artistic taste in arranging them. On previous occasions they had marvelled at the skill he displayed in floral decorations, and so always left it for him. He never before had so many to find places for, however, as he had to-day.

"Where did they all come from?" he asked, walking among and around the large pots that stood on the porch and on the grass in front, and the baskets of cut flowers lying everywhere.

"All from neighbors," replied Mrs. Fleming. "The

plants, of course, are only loaned. Now get to work, Paul, and direct us. The cut flowers we'll arrange first, because they will fade if not soon placed in water. I would not even touch one of these before you came, because I preferred your taste in their arrangement as well as in the plants," continued Mrs. Fleming.

"Oh, thank you!" said Paul again.

He stood for one moment, letting his eye glance over all the flowers; then he said: "I think I know where to place them all." All sorts of vases and receptacles suitable were brought out, and soon many hands were busy with the beautiful flowers, arranging them just as directed by Paul, whose quick fingers and artistic eye soon had them ready to be distributed through halls and rooms.

"Do you think you could spare some for Mr. Graves's and Hester's rooms?" asked Paul of Mrs. Fleming.

"Why, certainly we can," she replied, "and it was very sweet of you to think of it. Choose whichever you like, and I will send them up with your compliments. You could take them up yourself, Paul, only we are keeping Hester very quiet until this afternoon. You rescued the poor child just in time," went on Mrs. Fleming. "She would not have lived much longer had help not come when it did."

"And her father? He was rescued just in time too, wasn't he?" asked Paul, selecting a vase of beautiful pink roses for each of them, holding them while he stood before Mrs. Fleming, looking in her face questioningly.

"We are still doing all we can for him, Paul dear," she replied, taking the vases. "He has been ill a number of years, you know, and is very weak and feeble."

"Of course it would take longer for him to get well; but he will after awhile, don't you think so?"

"I hope so," was all Mrs. Fleming could say, as she walked off with the flowers, having been requested before by Dr. Andrews not to acquaint Paul with the sad news that he would never recover, and that at the most he had only a few more days to live.

There seemed to be nothing more to do: everything was in readiness and the sun still shone bright in the heavens when Dr. Andrews and Paul drove home over the dusty roads to get their lunch, and dress for the afternoon. It was not long before they returned again, this time with the whole family, just a little while before the band began to play. The lawns were already full of people, and the Home children were scattered here and there among them, dressed in neat costumes, all looking bright and happy. Most of them surrounded the band, that being the greatest attraction, as they were all tuning up their different instruments; but what attracted little Paul Arlington most of all, as he drove in the gate, was a little figure sitting on the porch in an invalid chair. He raised his hat to many as he passed, for he knew nearly every one; but his thoughts were with little crippled Hester, whom he was so anxious to see; as soon as he stepped from the carriage, he walked immediately up the porch steps, followed as usual by a number of children.

"I am so glad to see you, Hester," he said, raising his hat very politely, as he approached her chair. "Are you feeling stronger now?"

"Yes, I am feeling stronger every day," she replied. "I did not think I was so ill until they put me to bed. I am glad they let me come down to the concert to-day,

and to see you too," she said. "I am very fond of music."

"I am, too," said Irish Moll, who as usual was at Paul's elbow and listening to all that was said.

"I thought you all would like it," said Paul. "And you know you are to have a concert day every week while the weather is warm. I shall not be able to come to any but this one, though, because I shall be living miles away from here in my new home."

"And won't you ever come back again?" asked another little girl. "It won't be near so nice here if you won't come any more to see us." said another.

"I am very sorry I have to go," said Paul, with a little sigh, "but it can't be helped, you know." There was a tremor in his voice as he spoke, which no one noticed but Miss Hall, one of the teachers, who had Hester in charge.

"Of course, we all are very sorry to part with you, Paul," she said, "and we shall miss you more than we can say; but we shall see him again, children, for he will surely come on sometimes to visit Dr. Andrews and his relatives, and he will not forget us then, will you, Paul?"

"I will never forget any of you," he said earnestly.

Here the conversation was brought to a sudden stop, for the band struck up, startling them all. A number of the children ran toward the platform, thinking the nearer they were to the music, the more they would enjoy it.

Paul stood quite still, however, by Hester's chair, listening and bowing to the people who passed back and forth near the porch, many walking by purposely to see him, and the organ-grinder's daughter, whom they knew he had rescued from a most wretched life; they

had heard she would be on the porch that afternoon to enjoy the concert.

Paul did not know that the principal topic of conversation that afternoon among the people on the lawn was himself; and when he stepped down to talk to many who were just waiting for an opportunity to speak to him, he hardly understood when they said, "Allow me, Master Paul, to congratulate you on the great success of your concert." He never thought at the moment that it was the outcome of a proposition he had made to Dr. Andrews some months before, for that had happened so long ago, and the arrangements had been made and even the day fixed for the concert before he knew anything about it.

They smiled when he said, "Oh, it is n't my concert at all; it's the Home children's, and Dr. Andrews fixed everything."

"But it was all your idea, was it not?" asked a gentleman.

Paul thought a moment, then said, "Well, I told Dr. Andrews one time I thought it would be a good thing for the Home children to hear some music once in a while, but he attended to it. You see, I could do nothing without him."

"Hello! Persef. Where have you been all this time?" asked Roy, stepping up to Paul. "This is a jolly picnic, I tell you. Why don't you have one every day? Say! come over with me to the 'freshment table. I've been around there, and they are getting everything ready. Let's go get our seats before they all are taken. My! but I'm glad I'm alive to-day, Persef!"

Every one laughed who heard Roy, but that did not affect him in the least. Paul, however, felt very much

mortified and indignant at him for such a display of bad manners, especially as every one knew the refreshments were only intended for the Home children after the concert was over.

Paul said nothing then, but took Roy's arm and walked off with him a short distance until beyond hearing. Then he said: "Roy, you must not go near those refreshment tables; they are only for the Home children, and it is very impolite for you to go sit down at the table."

"Pshaw! If I had known that, I would n't have come to your old picnic at all. I think 'freshments the best part, and I don't think it's imperlite for just me to go."

"I tell you it is, Roy," persisted Paul, keeping tight hold of his arm, fearing even yet he might disgrace the whole family, notwithstanding all his efforts to keep him away.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," went on Paul, very much excited, and still keeping his grip on his arm. "If you'll promise me not to go near the tables until after all the children are seated, I will try to get you some refreshments." Paul had not the least idea when he spoke how it would be done, but if he could only put Roy off until then, he thought very likely some one would offer him some without the asking.

"Is it sure pop if I promise?" said Roy.

"Yes, sure," replied Paul, emphatically.

"All right. I'll promise, then," and thus assured, his mind felt at ease on the refreshment question.

"I tell you what, Perseffer, these are fine banders; but they can't beat the Knights of Pityus, for these horners' faces don't get near so red when they blow."

"It is because they play softer," said Paul; "I don't

like such awful loud music. Don't you think the children look well and happy? Just think how dreadful some of them looked when they first came to the Home. And Moll, you remember, could scarcely stand on her feet, or talk, and now she can run faster than any of them, and talks too much, Mrs. Fleming says; and Hester, even, is getting stronger every day."

"Course they all would look jolly on picnic days when music plays, and they have ice cream and cake for 'freshments," said Roy, as arm in arm they retraced their steps among the people again. All eyes were turned upon them admiringly.

"They look like the picture of the Princes in the Tower," remarked one.

They came to the benches where Mrs. Arlington, Grandma, and Aunt Helen and Grace were seated with their friends, and when Grace saw them, she ran to meet them, and took Paul's other arm, then all three children continued walking about among the people, stopping for a few minutes to talk every now and then, while behind them trooped a number of Home children.

Paul's mother felt very proud of him that day, in fact, the entire family did, for every one had something good and sweet to say about him. Even Aunt Helen was forced to acknowledge that she was pleased also. She never before had such a good opportunity to see how the Home children adored him; his influence over them was wonderful.

Dr. Andrews as well as Paul received many congratulations for his splendid management of the Home, and all expressed to him their regrets for the separation that was so soon to follow. It made him feel very sad indeed to think about it.

Occasionally Paul would return to the porch to have a little conversation with Hester. She was not at all tired, she said, and never spent a pleasanter day except that day at Beechwood. "I will never forget it," she said. "It was a beautiful dream that had come true, only —" and here she hesitated, then continued sadly, "Only poor Father, he did not get well; and if he only could be strong enough to be with me to-day, I could n't be happier."

"It will take him a long while to get well, because he has been ill so long; but I hope by the time you have the next concert you will have him with you," said Paul, encouragingly.

"I hope I will; but he must be very sick, for they won't let me see him," continued Hester, with tears in her eyes.

"Oh, that does n't mean he is any worse. You will soon see him now," continued Paul, full of sympathy for the poor child. "They did n't think it would be a good thing for one sick person to go to see another. I remember one time Pat was sick in bed with rheumatism, and had fever, and that made him cross. He is n't cross, you know, but it was only the fever. His cousin came to see him one day, and she had been sick with rheumatism too, and was n't well yet. She walked lame and gave a groan every step she took; and when she came in the room, Pat cried; yes, he did, even if he is a man, but it was the fever, you know, and he said: 'Phwat's the mather wid yez, thot yez kem to see me, wid a groan and a limp. Oi'll be bound Oi hev enough av thot to do meself. Shure, an' oblige me yez would to tek yerself hame and git to bed where yez belong.'"

Hester's countenance changed immediately at this, and she laughed outright, wiping the tears from her eyes at the same time. In fact, all laughed who heard him, so well did he imitate Pat in speaking the Irish brogue.

"So you see," he continued, "I guess it is not a good thing for one sick person to go see another."

"I suppose that is the reason," said Hester, feeling convinced that Paul must be right.

When the concert was over, Paul ran down on the lawns to say a last good-by to many he knew intimately. And soon the grounds were cleared, every one leaving except the Arlingtons and a few others who were connected with the Home, who remained to see the children at the refreshment tables, and assist if necessary to wait upon them.

Roy was delighted when Mrs. Fleming escorted him to a seat at the table among the children, and placed before him a heaping saucer of ice cream and a large piece of cake.

While they ate, Dr. Andrews spoke to the children, and was obliged to mention the fact that it was Paul's farewell visit, and that it might be months before they would see him again; but he tried to make it not seem too sad, for he did not want to mar either the children's or Paul's happy day by talking too much about this event.

"I expect to have him spend several weeks with me occasionally," he went on, "and of course you will see a great deal of him then." He wound up by saying: "Paul has something to say to you all, after which you can bid him good-by, as it is necessary for him to return home very shortly."

Paul stepped upon a stump of a tree that was near

him, where he could see all the children and be seen plainly by them, and without waiting a moment said in a clear voice, though it trembled a little: "I am very sorry I must say good-by to you all. I always loved to come here to see you, and be with you, but I will come on to see you whenever I can, and I shall always remember you, and hope you will all remember me."

That was all, but it was said so sweetly and earnestly, the tremor in his voice growing quite noticeable toward the last of the little speech, that every one felt very queer, and for a few moments there was not a sound, and several were seen to wipe their eyes. There was no knowing how sad a scene would have followed this if the spell had not been suddenly broken by Roy, who called out quite loudly: "Sing your jolly Sailor Song, Perseffer. I think they would like that better."

Every countenance changed as if by magic at this, and all laughed heartily. Instead of there being a very sorrowful scene at Paul's leave-taking, it was, after all, a very merry one, and all owing to Roy.

"Suppose *you* sing the Jolly Sailor Song for us, Roy," said Dr. Andrews, still laughing with the others.

"Oh, I can't sing like the Perseffer," he replied, looking a little shy, now that every eye was turned upon him. This all caused them to laugh louder.

"All who would like to hear Roy sing the Jolly Sailor Song clap their hands," said Dr. Andrews.

Instantly every pair clapped loudly, together with loud whistles from the boys.

"Now see how anxious they are," said Dr. Andrews. "Come now, step up on the stump here, so they can all see you, and do your best." And he actually did allow himself to be escorted to the stump and sang

every verse of the Sailor Song, which all pronounced done well, and the children clapped him again and again.

Shortly after this, two carriages were moving slowly toward the gate, with all the Home children following, the boys waving their hats, and the girls their handkerchiefs, while in the background stood teachers, managers, and servants doing the same. And a perfect chorus of good-bys filled the air, as they turned in the road. Then the Home children stood at the gate, and continued to wave their handkerchiefs after them as long as the carriages were in view.

CHAPTER XIV

MORE than a month had passed since Paul left Beechwood, and still it seemed impossible for him to feel at home with his new surroundings.

So many dreadful and unexpected things had occurred in such a short space of time that he was beginning with the dawn of each day to wonder what would happen before night.

It was not surprising that his head was in a whirl, for no sooner had they arrived at Avondale than they found that it was absolutely necessary for Mr. Arlington to go away for the winter to a warmer climate. A specialist who had been consulted in regard to his condition (which was found more serious than they ever dreamed of) advised a sea trip first, followed by a stay of several months in the south of France.

"Such a trip would do more toward restoring him to health than anything else I could advise," he had said.

When Mrs. Arlington realized his condition, she persuaded him to act immediately on this advice; and it was not many days before there was another sad parting to be gone through with, and the three Arlington children found themselves in a new home under the care of their young aunt and Hulda. Grandma accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Arlington across the seas.

Paul is thinking over all the occurrences that had taken place since the day that he had heard the start-

ling news in the summer-house at Beechwood. Nestling down in a large easy-chair, with his legs crossed and his chin resting on his hand, he is gazing, while he thinks, at the bright glowing coals in the grate before him. So quietly does he sit that one would think that he was asleep but for the constant blinking of his eyelids.

Ever since he came to Avondale it had seemed to him as if he were away on a visit, and that soon he would return again to his beautiful home; for somehow he could not get accustomed to all the changes. There was one thing he did, however, enjoy, and that was the going back and forth to Chicago in the train every day to attend school. That was a great experience for him, making him feel quite independent.

It was only a short ride, but he found much to interest him from the car windows as he rolled along, and also in the large busy city when he arrived there.

"If Father and Mother had not gone away," he was thinking, "I would be beginning to like it by this time, perhaps." He missed them very much, also the daily companionship of Dr. Andrews and the little faces of the Home children. It made him homesick to think of the loved ones who were absent, and with whom he had been constantly all his life. It seemed impossible for him to overcome the feeling, though he did make a great effort to do so.

This afternoon he felt very lonely and sad on his return from school. Aunt Helen had gone out with Roy and Grace, and Hulda was busy in the kitchen.

After eating the lunch that had been saved for him, he threw himself in the big chair and immediately gave himself up to thought. He wondered if he were

not dreaming, after all, and if it all had actually happened.

The little flames leaping up through the coals seemed to form pictures like a panorama, one after another looming up before him when he thought of Beechwood and all the old familiar places; but suddenly they vanished, for the door opened, and Roy and Grace bounded in the room with ruddy faces and sparkling eyes, full of life and merriment, their tongues chattering away at a great rate; they presented quite a contrast to the little philosopher sitting so quietly in the armchair, with his serious face and homesick thoughts. When Roy began to tell him about their walk and what they had seen, his face brightened up, and the dreamy look disappeared, and he turned eagerly to listen, his eyes blinking away faster than ever.

"Oh, I wish you had been with us, Perseffer," he began. "We had a daisy picnic, didn't we, Grace?"

"'Es, we did have a dreat big daisy picnic I ever did see."

"We walked away past all the houses," continued Roy, "and the church until we came to nothing but fields; then we walked up to the top of a great high hill, and when we got to the edge and looked down, guess what we saw?"

"A deer?"

"No."

"A pedler?"

"No."

"I give it up, then."

"Why, a big mill."

"'Es, a dreat big mill," repeated Grace.

"It was right by a creek, Persef, and looked something like our Beechwood creek."

"Sompin 'ike er Beechwood creek," chimed in Grace, thinking that would surely please Brother Paul.

"But when we got down to the bottom of the hill it was n't so nice; for the little houses around the mill were dirty and all breaking to pieces. They just looked like old broken-down chicken houses around a big barn."

"Jes 'ike chitten houses ayound dreat big barn," repeated Grace, opening wide her big brown eyes, so pleased at the interest Paul showed in all they said, and anxious to be the first to tell of some of these interesting things; but so far Roy had gotten ahead of her.

"Do people live in those houses that look like chicken houses?" asked Paul, eagerly.

"Course they do, Persef," replied Roy, with a great air of importance to think that for once he was able to give the Perseffer some information and to have made what appeared to him, at least, a most wonderful discovery.

"What did the people look like?" asked Paul, growing more and more interested.

"Oh! they looked poor and thin, just like the old organ-grinder and Hester."

"Jes 'ike er old orden-drinder and 'Ester," repeated Grace.

"And, Persef, some had no shoes or stockings on; and the chickens were walking right in and out their front doors, just like human beings."

"Chittens were walkin' yight in and out er f'ont doors, jes 'ike 'ey were human beans; and it was awsul

sadful, Bruver Paul," said Grace, noting Paul's look of surprise, and his interest growing deeper, while he listened to the description of this new and interesting discovery he had no idea existed so near Avondale.

"An' 'ey had 'ittle bits of dardens jis only about iss big," went on Grace, stretching out her hands to show the size, which would have been about a yard, judging from her measurement. "And 'ittle piggies were yunning ayound, and 'ittle bits of dirls and boys, and some dreat big mans and ladies, and a big w'eel went ayound and ayound in the water, and —" Here she was obliged to stop and take breath, and to think of something else that had not so far been mentioned, though she tried to keep right on and prevent Roy from having another chance; but the instant she hesitated, Roy started right in.

"Some had lots of goats in their yards, too, Persef; and some boy called after me, 'Hello, Curly!' I was just going for him to thash [thrash] him when Aunt Helen took hold of me and held me back. She would not let us stay and watch the mill, for she said it was not a very nice place down there. After we left there, we walked up another hill and around lots of fields again, and through a wood, until we came in Maple Avenue again. It was a jolly walk, I tell you, and I'm going again soon. Aunt Helen said we could n't go near there without her, though."

Roy and Grace had been standing all this time by the armchair, with hats and coats still on.

Roy could think of nothing more to say, so he skipped out of the room with a merry whistle, leaving Paul and Grace alone. Paul then took off Grace's coat and hat, and together they sat in the same chair.

Grace nestled up close to him and looked up into his face, while he stared intently at the fire, very busily thinking. Grace guessed what his thoughts were, and knew why he was so interested in all they had just told him. It was because the people were very poor and lived in old broken-down houses.

"Don't you fink it would be nice, Bruver Paul, to take er 'ittle boys and dirls some beyed and butter?" she finally asked.

"Did they really look so hungry, Robin? And did they look sick and tired, like Hester and her father?"

"'Es, 'ey weally did look awsul hungry, an' er 'ittle dirls' desses were all torn and soiled. I des all ere farvers lost er monies in er big pantic, and toodent det a sin'le penny to buy 'em shoes wiv."

"And did you say the chickens were walking in and out their front doors? And were pigs and goats in their yards?"

"'Es, the chittens were walkin' yight in and out er f'ont doors; but er doats and piggies were jes only walkin' in some of er 'ittle yards. Don't you fink you tood send all er 'ittle dirls and boys to Glenwood Home?"

"I'm afraid there are too many, Robin, and they are too far away. I will go there soon and see what I can do for them."

"Tan I doe wiv you, Bruver Paul? 'tause when I det a dreat big lady, I 'm dawn to help you find all er poor 'ittle dirls and boys in the world who dot no beyed and butter to eat. I tan wash er faces and make petty turls on er heads, and I tan take 'em petty desses, wiv ribbon shashes, shoes, too, and stockings; and wood n't

Dotter Anjers fink I was dood? 'tause he loves all er poor peoples, don't he?'

"Why, he loves them so much, Robin, he is working for them nearly all the time; and I want to be just like him when I grow up to be a man. But you must be very strong to do that kind of work, and Aunt Helen says if I think so much about the poor now, I will get sick, and never be a strong man, so I'm going to try never to worry about them; only, if I should happen to see any one poor and hungry, I would have to take them something to eat, and maybe some clothes to wear, but that would n't be worrying, you know. It would only make me glad to help them."

"It tood n't make any bodies sick jes to take some poor 'ittle dirls and boys beyed and butter, tood it?"

"No, I don't see how it could; it would make me sick *not* to take them any if I knew they were starving," said Paul, gazing wistfully into the fire. Then the conversation was interrupted by Aunt Helen calling Grace up to her room.

All Paul's home-sick feelings had vanished; he had forgotten all about them in the one and all-absorbing thought that there existed near his new home a settlement of poor people, living in most dilapidated houses. He imagined, from Roy's and Grace's description, that many of them must be without shoes and stockings; and this in the fall of the year was evidence of great poverty. He was building castles now and planning all the wonderful things he might do to help these people, if any of them were in actual want.

He longed for some one to talk to who might advise and assist him, but he could not think of one who could be consulted satisfactorily in the matter.

He would not for the world mention his plans to Aunt Helen, for he felt sure that he would in return receive only another lecture, and most likely she would forbid him ever approaching the place. He had already received a number of lectures from her since his parents departed, which only had the effect of making him less confidential every day.

Heretofore he had always been very free and outspoken with all his thoughts, but he had begun now to keep things more to himself, and to hesitate very often before relating anything to his aunt for fear of her disapproval.

"Now remember, Paul," she had very often said, "no more thinking in corners; no more talk or silly notions about the poor. So much time every day must be spent in outdoor games. I always did think it ridiculous for a child of your age to so interest himself in works of charity, and had I been your mother, I would have put a stop to it long ago; but now I have an opportunity of showing her what my management will do, and you will be so rosy and robust when she returns that they won't know you."

Paul always listened to these lectures with great respect, for he was too much of a little gentleman to speak rudely to his elders; nevertheless, they only made his heart grow a little colder toward her day by day, and the loss of those so dear to him was the more keenly felt, for there was no one now to whom he could go with all his perplexing questions, or from whom he could be sure to receive sympathy.

In every other way Aunt Helen was a model aunt; nothing was too much trouble for her to do for the children. She romped with them by the hour, joined

them in their games, assisted them with their lessons, and gave them the most watchful care. She failed only in one thing, — the art of managing little Paul in a way that would gain his affection; and this was simply because she did not understand him.

She appeared to be very severe and unreasonable to Paul; but she really was only following out her own theories.

She did not even show any appreciation for the little poems he wrote, although she was very proud of his talent; but she thought it was not wise for him to weary his brain by rhyming verses.

"Give that up, too," she had said. "Your school work is sufficient. The whole trouble is that your brain is too active, and you want more exercise for your body and less for your brain; so I do not want to see any more poetry while I have you in charge."

Owing to these rigid rules, which Aunt Helen tried to carry out, Paul was beginning to be very quiet in her presence, and even to shun her whenever it was possible to do so. He knew if his mother had been there that she would have been very much interested in these poor people, and would have gone immediately to see if any required help.

He also knew that his mother and Aunt Helen did not agree on charitable subjects, for he had frequently listened to their arguments, and so felt satisfied that he was doing right in laying plans to help the poor people who lived near him.

He came to the conclusion that he would not mention the subject to any one. There was only one that he knew would be interested and in sympathy with all his ideas in the matter, and that was baby Grace; but

she was such a little tot, and in a moment of forgetfulness might reveal the secret, did he take her into his confidence, even if she promised not to tell.

Every day now he began to watch for an opportunity to visit Mill Hollow, which he had heard was the name of the settlement Roy had described.

"It cannot be wrong for me to go there," he mused, "for Mother would go; and it would only be right to do as one's mother would, under the same circumstances." Then, too, he remembered what the Bible said about the poor; and a sermon that Dr. Andrews once preached, taking for his text, "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard." So of course it could not be wrong to do as the Bible said, even if Aunt Helen did not like the poor, he thought.

But day after day passed, and it seemed that no opportunity presented itself for him to get away without being missed.

The days were short, and it was three o'clock when he returned from school. Then generally he was sent out to romp and play with Roy and Grace, or went for a walk with his aunt.

He often wished that she would turn in the direction of Mill Hollow, but it seemed that she purposely avoided it; and so he began to give up all hope of ever getting there until his parents returned.

CHAPTER XV

IT was at the close of the services on a beautiful bright Sabbath morning, and Paul was passing out of the church door, when he was suddenly attracted by a weak, childish voice back of him, saying, "Angel child! Angel child! won't you give me a crust of bread?"

The voice and the words both startled him, and, turning quickly, he saw a poor, ragged, little beggar girl, trembling and shivering, shrinking back behind a recess in the stone wall when she saw he was coming at her call.

A tattered shawl covered her head and shoulders, which she held together with her thin little hands, stiff with cold; and she drew one foot up after the other from the snow-covered ground as she leaned up against the stone wall.

Paul followed her, and for a few seconds neither spoke a word. The sight almost took his breath away; but he quickly recovered himself, and laying his hand on her arm, said kindly, ' Did you say you were hungry, little girl? "

"Yes, I'm starving, angel child!" she gasped, big tears dropping on her cheek, which she quickly brushed away with the back of her hands, and the shawl, being thus released, fell from her head and shoulders. She made no effort to replace it, but stood and wrung her

hands in a manner that almost made the tears come to Paul's own eyes.

"Poor little girl! I am very sorry that you are so cold and hungry," he said. "But let me put my coat on you, it is very thick, and then I will get you something to eat." And as he spoke, he quickly unbuttoned it, and in a moment had it off and on the child, who simply stood and stared, making no objections to anything he did.

After buttoning the coat up snugly about her, he took the shawl and tied it over her head, talking in his sweet way all the time. Then suddenly it occurred to him to take her in the church, where it was warm, while he went home for some bread. So he immediately took her arm and said, "Come, little girl, let me take you in the church; you will not feel at all cold in there, and I will run home as fast as I can and bring you as much food as you can eat."

"Oh, get me some bread!" sobbed the child, wringing her hands again, as she slowly walked along with Paul's assistance. Then suddenly she turned, and pointing to a stained glass window representing Christ blessing little children, said, "I called to Him to take me to my mother, who's up there in the skies; but He would n't take me, see?" she gasped, growing very much excited, with a wild look in her eyes and a flush appearing on her cheeks. "He is the Good Shepherd my mother told me about, and He loves little children who are all alone in the world; but I guess He don't love me, because I asked Him again and again, and yet He won't take me to Mother. I'm so hungry and cold! You ask Him, angel child, won't you?" she said imploringly. "Maybe He will for you."

There was something very unnatural in the way the child spoke and acted, also in the expression of her face.

"It must be because she is very sick and weak, and don't know what she is saying," was the conclusion Paul came to while he listened to her queer talk about the Christ on the window, and wondered why she should call him angel child.

"If you are so hungry, little girl, why won't you come with me and sit down in the warm church while I go after the bread?" said Paul, trying to draw her away; but she still held back, looking wildly at the stained window.

"You can see the Christ plainer inside than here, if you will only come," he continued.

"Oh, can I see Him plainer inside?" she asked, her breath coming in short gasps. "Then I'll go," and immediately she allowed him to lead her. With tottering steps the poor child leaned confidently against the little friend of the poor, whose heart was stirred to its very depths by the pitiful condition of this half-starved and friendless little waif.

They were just about to enter the door when they met the sexton coming out, and he took a step back in surprise when he beheld the pair before him. No one else was around, the worshippers all having disappeared on their homeward way.

"Oh, Mr. Sands! please don't lock the door!" said Paul, quickly. "I want to take this little girl in the church to get warm, while I go home for some food for her. See how cold she is!"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Sands, raising his hands. "If this ain't a pretty how-dy-do. And you

have put your coat on her, too. Goodness, child! what would your folks say to that? You will get your death this cold morning."

"Oh, no, I won't. I do not feel a bit cold. Please let me take her in, Mr. Sands; she can hardly stand up, she is so cold and weak."

"She does look in a pretty bad way, that's a fact," said Mr. Sands, eying the child very closely. "I've seen her standing in the alcove of the church door several times, but she seemed to be harmless, so I never sent her off; but they're a hard lot down there," he went on, pointing toward Mill Hollow. "They all come from there, and I must be mighty careful about taking any of them in the church."

"But what could happen, Mr. Sands, if a poor sick little girl just sat in a pew for a little while? I will soon be back with some food for her; then she will feel better and can go home."

"If you will give me the key I will lock the door after me, and take good care of the church; and when I get her out again, I will leave the key at your house; indeed I will, Mr. Sands; please do not say no!" For Mr. Sands still stood in the door, barring the way, hesitating to grant Paul's request.

He knew many of the children who came from Mill Hollow were only little thieves, and frequently feigned sickness, and resorted to all sorts of tricks to work on people's sympathies; but he saw that this child was without doubt very ill, and it was quite evident she was sadly in need of food and warm clothing.

"Well, I guess she can do no harm," he finally said, stepping aside for them to enter, just as the beggar child gave a racking cough that shook her whole body.

It only took Paul a few moments to place her comfortably in a pew, while the old sexton followed and watched the proceedings with great interest, very much touched by the pathetic scene.

"You need not wait for me to come back, Mr. Sands," said Paul. "She said she would sit right here and wait for me, and if you will give me the key now I will close the door."

"All right, my little man; I guess I can trust you to look after things; but let me see first if you are able to manage the lock." So saying, he closed the door and handed the key to Paul, who found no trouble whatever in turning the lock, and in another moment the key was placed safely in his pocket, and he was running down the road as fast as his two legs could carry him; while the sexton walked off in an opposite direction toward his home, and occasionally turning for a glimpse of the little flying figure whose interest in a poor beggar child was so great. It made him feel that his own heart must be quite stony, for never once had he asked her if he could do anything for her, when he had seen her near the church, waiting, as he thought, to beg from the worshippers on their way out.

Dinner was ready at "The Oaks," a name Paul had given their new home; his other one had a name, and why not this, even if it was small, he had thought.

Aunt Helen stood at the door, looking up and down the road anxiously.

"It is very strange what has become of him," she thought. "I do not see a sign of him anywhere."

When she missed him on their way from church, she thought he had stopped to talk to some of the church people, as he frequently did; but the roads

now were quite deserted, and still no Paul made his appearance.

Finally she called up the stairs to Roy, and asked him if he had seen anything of him after services.

"Why, yes, I saw the Perseffer after church," he called over the banisters. "He found one of his beggars by the church, and he stopped to talk to her."

"Are you very sure you were not mistaken, Roy?" she asked, very much displeased at the possibility of such a thing. "I did not see any beggar when I came out, and Paul was right behind me."

"But she was there, for I saw her," said Roy. "She was behind the wall, and she peeped out at the Perseffer when he walked by her."

"Dear! Dear! It is too provoking, after all my pains," said Aunt Helen, walking up and down the hall quite excitedly.

"I believe I will go after him, for there is no telling how long he will stay, or what he will do if there's a beggar in the question. You might as well come down and eat your dinner, children," she called up the stairs, while she again put on her coat and hat.

When she stepped out on the porch she saw him coming at a breakneck speed, and without his overcoat.

"My dear boy, what does all this mean?" she asked, taking him by the arm when he reached the porch, panting for breath. "You are nearly exhausted, child, and blue with cold. Where is your coat?" She led him in while she spoke and seated him on a chair in the hall, until he recovered sufficiently to talk.

It was only for a moment, however; for so excited was he, and so anxious for the poor starving child, whom he feared might die before he returned, if he did

not hurry with food, that he for once had no fear of his Aunt Helen, or her opinions about the poor.

"I found a poor child starving and freezing," he gasped, holding his sides as if to still the fast-beating heart. "I had to put my coat on her, for she was so cold, and I must take her some food right away, or she might die before I get there," and he arose from the chair and started toward the kitchen. But Aunt Helen held him back, —

"You will please sit right here for a while until you compose yourself," she said. "You will be the one to die, Paul Arlington, and not the beggar child, if you allow yourself to get so excited and run until you are ready to drop. Now tell me quietly, where is this beggar?"

"In the church sitting in a pew."

"In a pew!" exclaimed Aunt Helen. "I hope not ours. Who put her there?"

"I did. The sexton said I might, and that she could stay there until I came back with some food. I have the key of the church in my pocket."

"And do you mean to tell me you have locked the child in the church alone?"

"Yes, all alone," replied Paul, recovering somewhat. "But she will be warm there, and when I take her something to eat she will feel better and can go home."

"I think the sexton ought to be discharged for permitting such a thing," said Aunt Helen.

"Oh, please let me go now!" implored Paul. "It won't take me long, and she is waiting for me."

"If you are tired, I'll take the beggar a loaf of bread," said Roy, who, with Grace, had come to see

what all the trouble was about. Grace had been listening to every word with the greatest interest, and, like Paul, her little heart went out in deepest sympathy for the poor little girl he was telling about alone in the church.

"'Es, let Roy take er poor 'ittle dirl some beyed, if you are tired, Bruver Paul," she said.

"No, I must take it myself. You see I am acquainted with her now, and she is so sick she might get frightened if she sees any one else. Oh, please, Aunt Helen, just let me go this once!" She hesitated a moment, then said, "Well, I suppose there is no other alternative now, if she is locked in the church; but remember, as soon as you give her the food, let her out and come home immediately."

To Paul's delight, she actually assisted Hulda to fill a basket with eatables, and also made a bundle of a nice warm shawl and hood, then helped him on with his school overcoat.

"Now, Master Paul, your little beggar girl will surely be good and warm with these on, and forget all about her hunger when she eats all this," said Hulda. "Come back as quickly as you can to get your dinner, and I will keep it nice and hot for you."

"And," added Aunt Helen, as she threw after him a roll of paper, "wrap your best coat in that as soon as you can take it off the child. I suppose it will be necessary to disinfect it before you ever wear it again."

He fastened everything securely on a sled, then away he went again as happy as a king.

He promised his aunt he would not run back so fast. It was impossible, however, to do so with his sled and

its load; but he got over the snow-covered ground as quickly as possible, and never stopped until he reached the church. The beggar child was still in the pew just where he had placed her, gazing at the stained window before her like one entranced.

She was aroused by Paul's footstep and turned eagerly toward him when he approached, and when she saw the basket, began to act very queer indeed. She clutched nervously at Paul's coat, which she still had on, and her body trembled from head to foot; and she sobbed and made strange moaning sounds, gazing with that wild look at the basket all the while.

"I hurried as fast as I could," said Paul, panting. "And I have brought you a nice warm shawl and hood, and lots of things to eat. Come, let me take off the coat now, for it is very warm in here; and before you go I will wrap you up in this," he said, holding up the shawl. Then throwing it across the pew, he took off the coat, then sat beside her with the basket, and handed her a piece of bread from it. The poor child clutched at it and devoured it ravenously. "She is worse than Moll," thought Paul, as he tried to coax her to eat slowly.

"Don't be frightened," he said soothingly, for she still continued to shake and make queer noises in her throat. He could not understand her strange actions, and why she should shiver when she was now in such a warm place; but he came to the conclusion that it was all because she was very sick and nearly starved to death.

"Will you tell me your name?" he asked, when he thought she had eaten enough for a time.

"Nell Myers," she replied.

"And will you tell me where you live, Nell? for if you are not strong enough, I will take you home on the sled."

"I don't live nowheres now," sobbed the child, "and I have no home. Father has left me, and I have no place to go."

"Have you really no home at all?" asked Paul, in astonishment. "And have you lived on the streets all your life?"

"I have lived with Mrs. Stein since Father left me until to-day; and I can't go back there again, for she ain't got enough for her own children to eat, and I can't take it any more, angel child, indeed I can't; it chokes me."

"Was this Mrs. Stein good to you?"

"Yes, she was good and kind; but she is very poor now, and has no money to buy her own children bread, and I can't go back, I can't go back!" she sobbed, beginning to tremble again. "I thought He would take me to-day," she continued, pointing to the Christ on the window. "I came to ask Him while they were singing in the church, but He wouldn't! He wouldn't, and I want to go to Mother; but He told me to ask His angel child for bread, and that is you, and you did, didn't you? Why won't He take me, though, when I want to go? It is so cold and dark in the world," she sobbed, growing quite hysterical.

Paul was at his wits' ends to know what to say to soothe the child, also to know what would be best to do with her.

His little brain was in a whirl for a time. He must get her out soon, but where should he take her? Not to his own home, for he knew his aunt would never

receive her in their house, and he could not leave her standing out in the cold alone.

Suddenly an idea occurred to him: to take the money he had in his little iron savings bank at home and pay this Mrs. Stein board for her. "She said that she was good and kind to her, but too poor to keep her. It will also help Mrs. Stein along, too. Why did n't I think of that sooner?" he wondered.

Poor Nell was leaning back now in the pew, shaking and sobbing, watching Paul with eager eyes; and when he turned to tell her of his plans for her, she suddenly began to cough, so hard, indeed, that she leaned over and rested her head in her two hands. Paul thought she would never stop. He never saw any one in such a paroxysm before. He thought of the pitcher of water the minister generally had under the pulpit, and he hurried off to see if it was still there. He found some, and pouring it in a glass, returned quickly to the poor exhausted child, and held it to her lips while she eagerly drank. Then she lay back again and said, "Angel child, won't you sing for me as the good people did to-day in the church?"

"I will sing a little for you if you promise me that you will let me take you back to Mrs. Stein's afterwards. I am going to pay her board for you, then she will have some money to buy you bread, and some for her own children, too."

"Oh, you are so good! You are so good, angel child!" she said, sobbing again. "He would not take me, but He sent you to take care of me, did n't He?"

"You must not call me angel child," said Paul, "because I am not an angel."

"Oh, yes, you are," she quickly replied, very much

excited, and looking at Paul with a wild, unnatural look, which quite startled him. "You must not say you are not, because He sent you; He told me so."

"She does n't know what she is saying," thought Paul, "and I must not contradict her again. Her mind must be weak like Mother's when she had typhoid fever, for she said so many queer things, I remember, and took me for an elephant once when I walked in the room."

Then he quieted her by saying, "Yes, He sent me, Nell, to take care of you, to bring you bread, then to take you back to Mrs. Stein's again, and she will be paid to keep you."

"I knew He did, I knew He did," repeated Nell, smiling, and throwing her head back again as if very weary. "Now sing, angel child, please sing," she said, closing her eyes.

Paul walked up to the pulpit, where stood on one side a small parlor-organ, used for the Sabbath school children when in session.

He seated himself, and throwing his head back, thought for a moment what to sing. He knew very little about notes, but had a wonderful ear for music, and could play in his own way any tune with which he was familiar; and he had also composed many little airs. When he accompanied himself, he simply struck a chord now and then that harmonized with the notes he sang.

He thought of several songs and hymns before he decided on one. She must be thinking a great deal about angels and heaven and the Christ, so I think she will like

"Angels ever bright and fair,
Take, oh, take me to thy care,"

he thought, and immediately struck a chord. Instantly the beggar child raised her head and looked around in a startled manner; then she saw the figure at the organ, and she leaned over and rested her arms on the pew in front; and with her breath coming quick and short, she stared in wonder at the little singer, and strained her ear to catch every word.

His voice was unusually sweet and pathetic, for he was singing just as he felt. Now his voice was low, with tender pathos, then higher it rose and clearer, thrilling the heart of the sick child with a joy so great that it seemed to her fevered brain that she was being lifted up and borne away while he sang. She leaned farther over the pew on her folded arms, then still farther. Her eyes opened very wide, and she became thoroughly aroused from the stupor that had come over her before he began.

A bright spot burned on each cheek, and though her temples were throbbing with the fever within, she felt it not as she gazed at the profile of the face before her.

Finally her eyes wandered to the Christ in the window with a halo about His head and the happy children about His knee, clothed in spotless white.

The sun streamed brightly through the window, so wonderful, and so real to the beggar child, every part of it seemed clear and distinct.

The rays shone in a diagonal direction, striking Paul at the organ, while Nell sat back in the shadow in one of the pews. It seemed to her fevered brain that the rays in some way connected the two as she followed them from the window to Paul.

"He must have been one of those little children at

His knee," she thought, "and He has sent him out of the window to sing for me."

"Yes," the Christ seemed to say, "I have sent him and he will take good care of you until I am ready to call you."

All pain and suffering were lulled for the time, while Paul still sang on; and all sorts of strange fancies filled the brain of the sick child in the pew while she listened to the words that thrilled her, and seemed to be intended for her, —

"Angels ever bright and fair,
Take, oh, take me to thy care, etc."

When the last note died away, Nell still sat in the same position and stared, watching every movement of Paul's, until he descended from the pulpit and came down close beside her.

"Come, we must go now, Nell," he said, taking the shawl and fastening it around her securely with the two large pins Hulda had thoughtfully stuck in it.

Then he put the hood on her head, and took her arm to lead her out.

"I will sing for you again sometime," he said, "if you will come with me now. You need not be afraid to go to Mrs. Stein's, for she will be glad to see you, and take care of you, because she will have money to buy all the bread she wants."

"If you'll sing for me again sometime, I will go," she said, turning her large black eyes upon Paul with a strange, unnatural look.

"He sent you, did n't He, angel child?" she went on, pointing to the Christ as they stepped from the pew in the aisle.

"Yes, He sent me," replied Paul, beginning now to realize the child's condition, and seeing that there was something wrong with her mind. He noticed plainly the flush on her cheeks, which seemed to grow deeper each moment, and he felt sure now that it was caused by fever, and that, of course, accounted for her queer talk and actions.

As soon as he got her outside, he fixed her comfortably on the sled, tied securely to it the basket, with the remainder of the food, then used her old shawl and his school coat for afghans to tuck snugly about her. He had changed the overcoats, thinking Aunt Helen would prefer he should use his school coat as an afghan in preference to his best one, and forgetting entirely the bundle of paper she had thrown after him, and her orders to be sure and wrap his best coat up in it.

He then carefully closed the church door, and started off with his precious burden to find a home for her in Mill Hollow. He never imagined his long-looked-for visit there would be under such circumstances as these.

He stopped at the sexton's door, which was on the way, and handed the key to his wife, who answered his knock.

"Tell Mr. Sands I fastened everything up all right," he said, politely raising his hat, and before the woman had a chance to say a word he was off.

Up the hill he trudged, hurrying as fast as he could with his load, keeping a close watch on Nell, stopping now and then to tuck about her more securely the shawl and coat.

"Are you cold?" he would ask, for the poor child was shivering and her teeth chattering, though she made no complaint.

She only shook her head in answer to his questions and closed her eyes occasionally, as though falling off to sleep.

"I must hurry," thought Paul, "for she must be very cold. I guess it is because she is so sick."

Soon he reached the top of the hill, and stood for a moment to take breath, while he gazed below at the little settlement with great curiosity.

It lay at the foot of two steep hills, which arose from it on either side, and close by a running stream, near which stood an old mill; and on both sides of the stream were a number of small houses and shanties, their roofs covered with snow.

It was not such hard work going down the hill, and Paul made much better progress. The first building he came to was a small liquor shop, outside of which stood a number of men and boys, watching the strange procession coming toward them.

When he approached them he asked in his polite and earnest manner, —

"Will you please tell me where Mrs. Stein lives? for this is a little girl who lives with her, and she is very sick, and I want to get her home quickly."

"It is Fred Myers' Nell, as sure as I 'm alive," said one who had stepped up close to the sled and peered in the face almost enveloped in the large hood.

"There 's her home," said another, pointing up the narrow road. "You can't miss it, for it is the only three-story brick in the place. But where did you find her, boy?"

"I found her by the church; she is very sick, and nearly starved. I gave her some food to eat, and I think she feels better; but she has a fever, and does n't

know what she is saying. My mother had a fever once, and I know how it is. Your head, you know, is not right, and you think all sorts of strange things; and Nell called me angel child, and thought the Christ in the church window-pane had sent me to take care of her; but I will tell you more about her when I come back. I must hurry now, for see how she is shivering."

The group had closed around him in astonishment and listened to every word with the gravest attention. He stood so fearless, so dignified, and yet looking so innocent and gentle, talking in his earnest way so feelingly of Fred Myers' little Nell that the coarsest nature among them was touched as silently they moved to make way for him.

"Good-by," he said. "Thank you very much for showing me."

"Jiminy! ef that hain't the greatest sight I ever seen," remarked one, shaking his head, while they all stood looking after him.

"Indade, it made the tears cum to me very eyes to hear the loikes av him talk," said a red-haired Irishman. "Shure, boys, an' his face is loike an angil's; an', faith, it's no place for the loikes av him to be afther visitin'."

"He is one of the children who moved in Ramsey's old house," said one. "I have seen him before, and heard tell that his father was ill and taken across the ocean."

"Oi 'll kape me eye on the young un, whoever he be, till he's safe out av this black hole, thot Oi will," said the Irishman.

When Paul arrived at the house, he was indeed sur-

prised to find it the largest and most respectable in the place, and he wondered how it was that Mrs. Stein could live in the best house and yet had not enough money to feed her children sufficiently with the plainest food, as Nell had told him. But he did not know until later that it was a tenement, and that Mrs. Stein only occupied two small rooms on the third floor.

When he knocked at the door, a dozen faces appeared at the windows; then the door opened, and nearly as many more appeared; and Paul wondered if they were all Mrs. Stein's family, and thought that it was no wonder she found great difficulty in feeding them.

A woman stepped out on the step in front of them all, and Paul raised his hat so politely she was nearly taken off her feet.

"Is Mrs. Stein at home?" he asked.

"What do you want of her?" she said, coming down on the sidewalk and pulling apart the hood which Nell wore.

"Goodness sakes! if it ain't Nell Myers. Where did you find her, boy?" she exclaimed. "I thought she was too sick to go out."

"I found her by the church, nearly frozen," said Paul, who was now surrounded by ten or fifteen children, all gazing at him with wide-open eyes and mouths, then at their sick little neighbor of the third floor huddled in a heap on the sled.

"You did, hey! Found her away over in Avondale by the church? Well, it's mighty queer how she ever walked that far. Jane," said the woman, addressing a girl of about fourteen years, who with the others was staring in wonder at Paul, "go up and tell Mrs. Stein Nell Myers is down here too sick to walk up-

stairs, and if she 'll get a place ready, I 'll carry her up."

The girl ran ahead, while the woman lifted Nell up bodily in her strong, brawny arms and started after her, and Paul followed with the basket, leaving the sled by the door.

Poor Mrs. Stein was surprised indeed when she heard the story. She thought Nell had stepped in next door to see a little girl of about her own age, the only child in all Mill Hollow whose company she sought, and with whom Mrs. Stein knew she spent a great deal of her time.

Mrs. Stein with her four children occupied two rooms, which were kept as clean as soap and water could make them; nevertheless, they bespoke great poverty.

Paul's heart sank within him when he saw the bare floors and the few pieces of furniture of the cheapest kind.

Mrs. Stein stood at the door to receive them when they came up. She was a short little German woman. Her black hair was parted and smoothed straight behind her ears. A long string of boys and girls followed Paul, all eager to see more of him and hear him talk; for it was something unheard of in Mill Hollow for any child who lived among the fine people in Avondale to come in their midst on any errand alone, and for one to come on an errand of mercy had never been known before.

Tears stood in Mrs. Stein's eyes when she saw Nell, and it drew Paul to her immediately. They were not only shed in sympathy for poor Nell, but also on account of her inability to look after her, and provide for her the nourishing food she required.

She pointed to an inner room, and wiped her eyes with her calico apron, as she said to her neighbor who carried Nell: "Vill you be goot enough to lay her in dere? I vos sorry I ain'd got noddings better, but I vos a poor woman mit little work dish winter," she went on, leading the way and helping to place Nell on the old rickety cot.

She looked at Paul when she spoke, as though it was meant principally for him.

"She told me you had been good and kind to her," said Paul, following them without an invitation in the next room.

"Och! I've not been as goot as I ought to the child," said Mrs. Stein, the tears now rolling down her cheeks, while she leaned over Nell and took off the hood and shawl, and arranged her as comfortably as possible, covering her with an old ragged quilt.

"I got no money, mine leetle friendt, to get enough bread for my own family," she went on. "But dot girl she vos a goot one, und I love her, und I pity her. Her mudder vos dead, und her fadder drinks und vos not kind to her; den he leave her, and never cum back."

"It's very sad," said Paul, with a sigh, standing close beside the cot, watching Nell with a new interest, while Mrs. Stein related something of her life.

Her eyes were closed, and apparently she was sleeping and oblivious to all that was going on.

"If you love her and were kind to her, but have not enough money to feed her, I will send you some every week, Mrs. Stein, and I would like her to stay with you."

"Vot ish dosh you say?" exclaimed Mrs. Stein, scarcely believing her own ears, while Mrs. Carter, of

the first floor, stood with arms akimbo and stared in amazement at Paul, wondering whether they were being visited by some fairy, who would be able to grant their every wish. And the children in the doorway, who had followed them in, looked at one another with surprised faces when they heard what Paul said.

"I will send you some money every week for Nell's board; that is what I said," continued Paul. "So you can buy food for her, and have enough for yourself and children too."

"Vell, if I could get a leetle money dot would help me along, mine leetle friendt, vy, I loogs after her goot. Dot sick child, she don't know how sick she be, und I don't t'ink she live drew dish winder."

"Do you really think she will not live through the winter?" said Paul, his voice full of sympathy and surprise, while his eyes filled with tears.

"Yah, mein air, dot vos so; och, my! och, my!" said Mrs. Stein, shaking her head sorrowfully as she looked down again on poor Nell's thin face and watched her labored breathing.

"But if she gets plenty to eat now, and is kept nice and warm, don't you think she will get well after a while?"

"Nein, nein, mine leetle friendt, she vos too far gone. See how short she breathe, den don't you see her drubles vos too much here for her," said Mrs. Stein, laying her hand against her heart. "She vos a goot leetle t'ing, und I nuss her just vat I can."

"I know you will take good care of her now," said Paul; "and if you will please empty this basket, I will go home. If she should ask for me when she gets awake, tell her I will be here soon again."

"I danks you, und your goot families always, for you vos goot und kind," said Mrs. Stein, handing him the empty basket.

"Do not worry about the money," said Paul; "I will bring it soon," and with one more longing look at Nell, and a good-by which was meant for all, he walked toward the door.

The children stepped aside to enable him to get through the door. Many were standing in the halls and on the stairs, too, as he made his way down to the door. A number of men and women were also among them.

Word had passed from one to another that a beautiful boy had found Nell Myers nearly dead by the church in Avondale, and had brought her all the way home on his sled; and it was not long before nearly all the residents in Mill Hollow heard of it, and with shawls and aprons thrown over their heads, they emerged from their miserable homes, and made for the house where Mrs. Stein lived, many walking in the halls and even up the stairs, eager to get a glimpse of the child who had been so kind to poor Nell Myers.

When he stepped outside the door, a crowd of children surrounded the sled, making all sorts of remarks about it.

"Hain't it a beaut?" said a little girl, who had already taken possession of the low seat which was fastened on it.

"Naw, it hain't worth a cent with that air on. I'd chop that up to smithers; it's a girl's sled," remarked a red-faced little boy, looking at it rather enviously notwithstanding what he said, and longing to own it, for the seat could easily be gotten rid of.

All talking ceased, however, when Paul appeared, and they all stepped aside for him to take the sled.

Paul heard this last remark and noticed their envious looks, and saw the little girl jump off quickly when he approached, as though being afraid of being caught taking possession of it.

Immediately Paul thought: "Poor little things! I guess they never had a real sled. What fun they would have with this one! I guess Grace would not care if I left it; she can get another."

He stood only a few seconds thinking, then he handed the rope to the little girl who had been sitting on it, and said, "If you would like to have the sled, I will give it to you. I know you will often give them all a turn, but you can call it yours."

The child's hands closed on the rope with a tight grip, and her thanks and delight were only shown by the expression of her face, which was enough for Paul without any words.

"Good-by, all," he said, raising his hat in his usual polite manner, and off he started on a run, thoroughly aroused now to the situation and his long absence from home. How angry his Aunt Helen would be, especially as he remembered for the first time her instructions about returning immediately home, and the wrapping of his coat in the paper. That very coat was on his back, and his school coat he carried on his arm.

The inhabitants of Mill Hollow looked after him until he was lost to sight, and they thought and talked of nothing else the rest of the day. They had never seen so beautiful a face before, neither did they ever hear a child talk in such a manner; but what impressed

them the most, after all, was his tender care of Nell Myers, whom they all knew. They also knew that she was half starved as well as ill, and that Mrs. Stein was very poor that winter, being unable to get sufficient work, but that she shared her last crust with Nell; yet not one had offered to do anything for her, though many were better able to feed her than poor Mrs. Stein.

Mrs. Carter was the centre of attraction after Paul had disappeared. She had carried Nell upstairs, and heard all that was said, and saw all that was done, so to her they all went for information.

"Law me! she 's in luck, she 's in luck," she kept saying, meaning Mrs. Stein. "I would n't mind bein' in her shoes meself. She 'll make on it, mark my word. I wish I had such a good chance; but then I won't begrudge her; she was so good when my Jane was sick two years ago, setten up with her nights and buyen her orangies and ice cream, and I can't begrudge her. I never seen anything like that boy in me whole life; he 'll not live long, I 'll be bound. I 'm thinkin' he 's too good for this place. I hain't shed a tear sence me Bill died, but, bless me soul! I cum near it when I hered him talk so feelin' like of Nell Myers, and payin' Mrs. Stein board for her."

When Paul reached the saloon he was still on a run. The same men still stood before the door, looking out for his return.

The Irishman who had been determined to keep his eye on him had started to walk toward Mrs. Stein's house, when he saw he had entered the door, and was quite a while making his appearance; but before he arrived there, he saw him come out, then retraced his

steps back to the saloon to join his companions, expecting Paul to stop again and entertain them by relating more about his finding little Nell, as he had promised; but he, as well as they all, was very much disappointed, for Paul did not even stop, but called out as he ran by, "I am very sorry, but I can't stop now; it is too late. I will tell you about her the next time I come."

On, on he ran, now climbing the hill and panting at a great rate, thinking only of his aunt's displeasure and anxiety at his long absence. When he arrived at the top of the hill, the first person he saw was none other than his Aunt Helen herself, making for Mill Hollow with all possible speed. He was so long in returning that she thought it advisable to go in search of him.

Imagine her surprise, upon arriving at the church door, to find it locked; and seeing the tracks of the sled going in the direction of Mill Hollow, she was convinced that he had taken the beggar child to that disreputable place. Of course, she imagined that was where she came from; for she had heard that all beggars seen in Avondale came from Mill Hollow.

As fast as her feet could carry her, she followed the tracks of the sled; and when she saw Paul appear at the top of the hill, safe and sound, it was a relief that could be better imagined than described.

"Is it possible, Paul Arlington," she exclaimed, "that you have been down in Mill Hollow among the thieves and beggars?"

"I only took the little girl home, Aunt Helen. I had to, because she was too weak to walk."

"You make me very angry, Paul, with all this fool-

ishness about beggars. Don't you know that you cannot believe half of them? and that they resort to all sorts of tricks to work on the sympathies of soft-hearted, innocent people like yourself, who accept all they say as gospel truth? I believe that girl feigned sickness just to get you down in Mill Hollow, and perhaps rob you. It is a wonder to me that they did not steal your clothes from off your back."

Paul felt the blood mounting to his cheeks at these words, which seemed to him very unkind as well as untrue. He was wishing she had only seen Nell; for then she could not help but be convinced that her condition was not feigned. But he well knew that there was no use in arguing the matter. She was very angry, and there was nothing he could say that would excuse his actions satisfactorily to her.

"I am thankful that you at least escaped with your life," continued Aunt Helen, as they walked rapidly along toward home. "The responsibility of looking after you, Paul, during your parents' absence, is, I fear, more than I bargained for; and I am very much discouraged that I am so far not able to break you of this foolish notion of thinking that you must be running after every beggar that you see on the streets."

"I am sorry to so displease you, Aunt Helen," said Paul, in a choking voice; "but it seems that I cannot help it about the poor."

Aunt Helen looked down into his face and said nothing for a moment; she could not have spoken then, even if she wanted to very badly. She felt very much like giving him a hug, and telling him never to mind, that she did not mean to be so cross; but no, that would never do. She must show her displeasure at

all such actions, if she ever wished to cure him of them.

Paul's eyes were filled with tears, and he heaved a deep sigh, and looked away off at the deep blue sky overhead, as the words of the Scripture came to his mind again, "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, shall cry himself, but shall not be heard." Then his conscience seemed to tell him that he was doing right.

CHAPTER XVI

PAUL was glad he had an opportunity of being entirely alone with his thoughts later in the afternoon; for he had so much on his mind in assuming such a great responsibility, it seemed impossible to think of anything else. Aunt Helen was lying down exhausted, after her long walk and anxiety, while Hulda had taken Roy and Grace out for a walk, so Paul sat alone in his favorite chair by the grate fire. Aunt Helen, thinking he, like herself, had had sufficient exercise for one day, told Paul it would be advisable for him to take a nap on the couch. He did try to do as she requested, but sleep was impossible. He could not keep his eyes closed, and finally, when the house was quiet, he arose and seated himself in the armchair, gazing into the burning coals, as though he were sure of finding satisfactory answers there to all the questions he was asking himself.

"There is only enough money in my bank to pay two weeks' board for Nell. Now how can I get more when that is gone?" That was the most important question of all.

One idea after another revolved in his brain, but was always followed by some objection that made it impossible; but suddenly his eyes blinked very fast indeed, his face brightened up, and he leaned forward in his chair, looking closer at the burning coals. Surely he

saw something there that was very satisfactory. Then suddenly he clasped his hands, jumped up, and walked up and down the floor quite excitedly. "I have it! I have it!" he exclaimed, "and Nell can have bread as long as she lives." The more he thought of his plan, the surer he was of his success. Presently he sat down again, and tried to map out in his mind just the course he would take in carrying it out. "I will begin to-night," he thought, "and no one will know anything about it. I am sorry Father and Mother are not home, for they could help me, and so would Dr. Andrews, but as they are not here, and as Aunt Helen does not love the poor, I must do it all myself.

"To-morrow morning I will take five dollars down to Mrs. Stein before school. If I start just a little earlier, I shall have time to stop there and catch the train at Fall Brook Station, which is near Mill Hollow. Then, before I come home from school, I will stop at the stores and get all the things for my books, and I know I shall soon have some made, and sell them in Chicago." And so ran his thoughts, as he sat undisturbed for an hour. By the time the children returned, everything was clear in his mind, all obstacles removed, and his heart light and happy, notwithstanding Aunt Helen's displeasure of the morning. Everything else was of little moment now, save the one absorbing thought of carrying out his plan for the sick little beggar girl.

That night after Roy had gone off to sleep, Paul slipped out of bed and took five dollars from his bank, and placed it in the pocket of his school jacket; also an extra half-dollar for some purchases he intended to make, for he did not wish to run the least possible chance of forgetting it in the morning. Then he com-

menced to compose a poem which was a part of his great plan. The light was not very bright in the room, but he feared to have it brighter, for Aunt Helen might step in and wonder what was going on. He lay in bed with pencil and paper, and when he heard a footstep, slipped them under his pillow and lay quite still for a time, then brought them out again and continued to puzzle his brain in making lines rhyme to express in a way that was satisfactory to himself the story of Little Nell, which he had thought appropriate for the first poem to place in this wonderful book he had planned and that was to be sold to support her. When Aunt Helen slipped quietly in the room to put out the light before retiring, she did not know that one child was still awake. He lay quite still with his eyes closed, clasping under the pillow the paper and pencil. It was sometime after the house had become quiet that Paul's weary little brain was at rest; and though the day had been such an exciting one, he was awake earlier than usual the next morning, starting for school at least a half-hour sooner than was his regular custom.

When he reached Mrs. Stein's room, he was completely out of breath, and when she appeared in answer to his knock, he was unable to speak for a moment.

"Vy, mein chile, vot ish der madder mit yer? Yer run too fast right away. Gome in, sit down once," she said, wiping off a chair with her apron.

"Thank you, Mrs. Stein, but I haven't time to sit down. I only stopped to see how Nell was, and to bring you this money for her board. Do you think five dollars will be enough for a week?" he said, handing her the bill.

"Och, mein chile, dot vos plenty. I danks yer goot

people for dere kindness," replied the kind-hearted German woman. "I vill fix der chile up comfortable like, and buy a new planket for her. She ish not any better dish mornin', leetle friend, und vos callen 'angel chile' all der time, und I don't know vot she mean."

"Why, that was what she called me yesterday," said Paul. "And I told her I was no angel. Then she looked so wild and frightened, and said, 'Yes, you are, for the Christ told me so.' Then I thought it must be that she had a fever, and it made her talk queer, because you know people with fever have their brain burning and don't know what they say."

"So, so, I t'ink that vos der troubles. It vos yer den she mean all der time. Vell, gome in und see her, den," and Mrs. Stein led the way while Paul followed her to Nell's bedside in the adjoining room. Mrs. Stein's little children stood around with wide-open eyes, eagerly watching him and listening to all that was said.

As soon as Nell saw Paul she trembled violently, just as she had the day before, and said feebly, "Angel child," as she stretched out her wasted hands toward him.

Paul took one in each of his, and bending over her said, "Are you better to-day, Nell?"

"Yes, I'm better, and you've brought me bread, have n't you?"

He was about to say no, he had not brought her bread, but had given Mrs. Stein money to buy what she needed. He was beginning, however, to understand her condition, and after the experience of the day before, to know it was best not to contradict her. Besides, it was the same as bread anyway, so he simply

said, "Yes, I have brought you bread, and you will have some every day."

"I knew you would," she said, and then closed her eyes as if very weary. Then he said, "Good-by, Nell, I must go now, for I have a train to make to be in time for school."

She opened her eyes and smiled, but said nothing, as Paul released her hands and slipped quietly out of the room.

"Good-by, Mrs. Stein," he said at the door. "I will come as often as I can to see Nell, and will bring you the money every week."

Mrs. Stein wiped a tear from her eye as she said, "Goot-py, I danks yer mit all mine heart; Nell vas right, because yer vas von peautiful angel chile, vat vas goot und kind." Paul laughed to himself as he ran down the stairs and up the street, to think of Mrs. Stein comparing him to an angel. "She is so glad to get a little money to help them along, she don't know what to say," was what he thought.

He saw a number of faces he remembered seeing the day before. There were many little children he would have liked to stop and talk to, they looked so forlorn and neglected, but he had not a moment to spare. He only raised his hat now and then as he passed them on a run, calling pleasantly, "Good-morning." The train was just slowing up when he reached the platform, and in another moment he was seated in the car and speeding along to the city, with no other thought but of little Nell and his plan for supporting her. Even his teacher noticed he was not as attentive as formerly, and stammered over his recitations; but his mother had told her that he must not be pushed, for he was a nervous child

with a brain too active for his years. He had become a great favorite with her, and she was beginning to understand him and to appreciate his highly strung, nervous temperament, and knew when his lessons were not prepared as they ought to be, and he seemed inattentive, that it was simply because he was not well, and perhaps his little brain was being overtaxed.

Before he returned home that day, he stopped at a book-store, a place where he had frequently been, but not inside, only to look in the window at the pictures and dainty painted cards, with pretty verses printed on them, but the store has a much greater attraction this particular day, for it is connected with his great plan. He does not pause long to look in the window, only just to see whether the books that he wishes to refer to are inside. "Will you please let me look at some small books of poetry?" he asked a salesman.

"Books of poetry," repeated the man, gazing down on the sweet, interesting face admiringly.

"Yes, some small ones, please, like those painted ones in the window. How much are they?"

"We have them at different prices," replied the man, taking some from a case close by, and spreading them out on the counter for Paul's inspection.

They were all very dainty and sweet, Paul thought, with birds and flowers of different colors painted on the outside. Some contained only one poem, while in others there were several, with illustrations in delicate colorings.

"How much is this one?" asked Paul, holding up one he thought the prettiest of all. The outside was covered with forget-me-nots, while diagonally through them in gilt letters was the word "Poems."

"That one is seventy-five cents," replied the salesman, becoming more and more interested in the earnest face and manners of the child, and not surprised at all that books of that style were his choice, for he looks like a little poet himself, he thought.

"Thank you, sir. I am much obliged to you, but I did not want to buy any to-day, only to know what they cost." And with one longing look at the forget-me-not book, he left the counter and walked out of the store.

The salesman thought that perhaps the price was higher than he expected, and felt sorry that he was disappointed, for he seemed very desirous of purchasing a book. "I feel like making that little chap a present of the book," he remarked to another salesman. "Well, call him back and I will go halves with you," he replied. "He looks like a little prince, the dear little fellow. I was watching him and his envious look at the book as he left the counter."

Paul was outside when the door opened and he heard a voice calling, "Come here, little chap. I want to speak to you," and Paul turned and followed the salesman in the store. It was a very large one, and a number of salesmen stood around the room and watched the presentation of the book he had so admired.

"Will you accept this little book as a gift from Mr. Vaughan and me?" said the salesman, handing it to him while he spoke. "We know you admire it, and also that you will enjoy the poems within."

Paul was so astonished that he was actually quite bewildered for a moment. Then he said politely, "Oh, thank you, thank you. I cannot tell you how glad I am to have it." And his face grew so bright, and his eyes fairly danced with pleasure. "Good-by," he said,

reaching out his hand to shake that of the salesman. "I am in a great hurry to-day, but I will stop in again to see you."

"What kind gentlemen they are!" he thought, as he hurried along to a stationery store, where he purchased plain paper as nearly like that in the book as possible; then some that was embossed for the outside. From there he went to a trimming store and bought silk cord of different shades to match the various colored flowers he intended painting on the cover of his books. Pencils and paints he had at home, of all kinds, so there remained nothing more to buy, and off he hurried to meet his train. As soon as he was seated, he took paper and pencil from his pocket to compose more verses of his poem. "If I only could get that finished," he thought, "the books will soon be ready, for I have some other poems already made which I can put in the book. But I must have the first about Nell, so that people will know what they are sold for."

Every spare moment he could find, he was busily engaged with his books. He took the greatest pains in cutting the paper evenly, just the size of the forget-me-not book, which he had always beside him for a copy. He folded them exactly in the centre; then the heavy embossed sheets the same; placed them all evenly together, and fastened them with the silk cords tied in a bow on the outside.

When he grew tired composing, he would take up the painting. He copied the flowers from cards and colored picture books, drawing them first faintly with a pencil, then painting them in their natural colors. There was one book with pansies, tied with purple cord; one of pink wild roses, tied with pink; one of

forget-me-nots, tied with blue, as nearly like the copy as he was able to make it, and a number of others, all with cord to match the flowers. It was no uncommon thing to see Paul with his paints, so they never noticed what he was doing. Only once Aunt Helen leaned over his shoulder as he sat at his desk, and said, "What are you painting lately that seems to take up so much of your time? Flowers I see, and pansies. They are done very well. Let me have it," she asked.

"Oh, please don't," said Paul, holding his arm over it to screen it from her eyes. "It is a secret, Aunt Helen, and I can't let you see it now."

"Well, I won't try to pry into any secrets, Paul," she said, moving off, "but don't spend so much time over it, whatever it is; I want to see you out in the air more, for it seems to me that you are spending more time at this desk than is good for you."

To compose the poem and make it express just what he desired, was a greater task than he had at first imagined it would be. At times he lay awake half the night, too excited to sleep; and if he happened to think of a line or two that he thought appropriate, he wrote it down on paper in the dark, so that he might not forget it by morning.

He always had the dictionary close beside him when he wrote during the day, to be sure of the spelling and the proper meaning of words.

He made almost daily visits to Nell, who was beginning to improve, though not sufficiently to sit up.

He had taken the rest of his money at the beginning of the second week, which left now only a few days to finish the poem and place it in the book with others he had already selected from his collection of several

years. He realized more than ever the great responsibility he had taken upon himself, and was afraid to think of the consequences if he could not finish the books in time, or could not sell them if he did.

In four more days he managed to finish six complete books, and started off for school with them in his bag, wrapped in paper that they might not get soiled.

He could scarcely realize the delightful moment had come at last when his great plan had actually been carried out, with the exception of one thing, — the selling of the books.

He knew of no other way to dispose of them than to stand on the sidewalks, as he saw the street fakirs do, when selling their wares.

Immediately after school he made his way to one of the principal thoroughfares, and stood near a corner with his school bag hanging from his shoulder, and the precious books in his hand, all in readiness to hold them out before the many pedestrians, and ask them to buy. But somehow now that the moment had come, it did not seem quite so easy. He took from the package one of the books he thought the prettiest, with forget-me-nots on the outside, somewhat different from the one presented to him, being painted in the form of a wreath with the word "Poems" in gilt letters running through the centre, an idea of his own.

"Will you please buy a book of poems, — only seventy-five cents?" he tried to say several times, but his voice was scarcely audible. The words seemed to stick in his throat, and a strange trembling took possession of him, and before he was aware of it his eyes filled with tears. "Why, what is the matter with me?" he thought, hastily brushing them from his cheeks. "I

have nothing to cry about, and I am only glad because my books are finished." Then with a great effort to overcome these sensations so new to him, he cleared his throat, stepped boldly out before a lady, and holding up the book, said quite distinctly, though his voice trembled, "Will you please buy a book of poems?"

"A what?" the lady asked, stopping, and looking down in the little face upturned to hers, wondering how it was that such a child, so tastefully dressed and evidently refined, should be selling books on the street.

"A book of poems," repeated Paul. "Please buy one, only seventy-five cents, and made just the same as the books they sell in Young's store, only the poetry is different."

"Are you actually obliged to do this, child?" she asked, taking the book and straightening her glasses.

"Yes, I'm obliged to," replied Paul, very solemnly, waiting eagerly to see if she would purchase one, after she had examined it. But she only glanced at the book, and did not even open it. The child interested her more, and she never dreamed that the book was made by him, and the poetry it contained was of his own composition. They must have suddenly become reduced in circumstances, was the conclusion she finally came to, and have sent this child out to sell these books. She took out her purse and counted seventy-five cents and handed it to Paul, whose delight knew no bounds. He raised his hat and said, "Thank you very much," and, feeling greatly encouraged, he lost some of his timidity, and began immediately addressing men, women, and children, as they passed, while his first purchaser stepped back a few steps to watch him, so interested was she in the novel scene. He addressed several

before any one stopped, although they turned and looked at him in wonder and admiration. Finally he saw an elderly gentleman with a kind, genial face, and, stepping quickly before him, he held up a pansy book, and, as before, said, "Won't you please buy a book of poems? Only seventy-five cents." The gentleman stopped suddenly, and looked down upon the little street fakir in astonishment, raising his eyebrows up in a very funny manner before he spoke. Then he said, as he took the book, "What did you say child?" for although he had heard plainly, like the lady, thought there must be some mistake and that it could not be possible such a child was selling books on the streets.

"I said, Won't you please buy a book of poems, sir?" repeated Paul, quite loudly.

"A book of poems, eh! Whose poems, may I ask, little man?" said the gentleman, looking Paul over from the top of his sailor hat to his leather leggings.

"They are all mine," replied Paul, rather timidly, fearing that fact might interfere with making a sale. "But please buy one, sir, even if they are not very good; for the money is for a poor sick child, and the first poem will tell something about her."

"All your poems, eh! Do you mean you composed all these verses?" he asked in surprise, glancing through the book.

"Yes, I composed every verse," replied Paul.

A number of persons were attracted by this conversation, and in a few minutes they were the centre of a circle two rows deep. Paul's first purchaser stepped up quite close when this conversation began, and she was more interested than ever when she heard the poems were composed by himself.

"Why, certainly I will buy one, if you are the poet," said the gentleman, smiling. "But tell me what your name is, little fellow, and how you come to be selling books on the street."

"My name is Paul Arlington, and I sell them for a poor little girl who has not a cent in the world to buy clothes or food."

"Won't you all please buy?" he asked, passing around all that were left into the hands outstretched in the crowd.

"I am sure you will buy him out," said the gentleman, addressing the people. "He composed the poems inside, and I am sure they will be very interesting."

Paul blushed at this, and felt he was receiving praise he did not deserve, so he said quickly, "I am afraid you will not think the poems very good, but the first tells about the poor beggar child, and it is all true, and perhaps when you read it you will get some of your friends to buy. I will be here again as soon as I have more made."

"I do not believe his parents know of this," remarked the elderly gentleman to the lady who bought first, while in the mean time Paul was collecting the money for the remainder of his books.

"I am sure they do not," said the lady, "and it must be all true, and how pathetic to think of him helping along a beggar child in so sweet and novel a manner."

"Oh, thank you! thank you!" Paul was saying, as he received the money, almost overcome with joy to find such a ready sale for his books, his only regret being that he did not have more, for many would have been purchased.

"If Nell were here she would thank you all too; but as

she is ill in bed, I will thank you for her." And with these words he raised his hat and made his way through the crowd, running up the street at a great rate. The elderly gentleman and also the lady, who had become especially interested, intended to ask him more questions and learn more about him ; but he was off before they had another opportunity, and they could only stand with the others and watch the little figure's flying legs until he was lost to sight.

Paul's heart continued to palpitate for some time after the train had started. It seemed impossible to quiet its rapid pulsations, especially when he thought of the large sum of money lying snugly in his pocket, and every book sold, with the prospect of having a ready sale for as many more as he could make. All these pleasing thoughts had the same effect on him now as a hard run would have, making his heart thump in a very quick and nervous manner, accompanied by those strange trembling sensations he could not understand. It was all because he was exhausted both in body and mind, and his delicate nerves were feeling the effects of the strain. He leaned back wearily in the seat, and gazed out of the window, blinking his eyes very fast, as one thought after another chased through his tired brain. Finally a tear came, then another, as they had shortly before, and which he hastily brushed away, wondering what made them come when he was so glad. At last he came to the conclusion that it must be because he was very tired, for he was conscious for the first time of a great weariness, and it was an effort for him to get up when the train stopped at Avondale.

PAUL'S BOOK OF POEMS

LITTLE NELL

HAVE you heard the tale of little Nell?
How she came to church at the toll of
the bell?
But stood outside in the drifted snow,
For inside she thought no beggars can
go.

But she wanted to hear the singing that
day
And also to the Christ to pray,
That he would take her out of the
cold,
And tenderly lift her up in his fold.

She stood 'neath a window in a deep
alcove
That represented Jesus, telling his love
To dear little children who stood by his
knee,
And she knew from all care and want
they were free.

So she longed that day to be with them
there,
Those little children so bright and fair,
So that she too, like them, could be
near
Those loving arms and know no fear.

For she knew not where in the world
to find
One who would be to her good and
kind.
Her mother was dead, and her father,
they said,
Had left her alone without money for
bread.

So she called to the Christ on the win-
dow-pane,
"Oh, come, take away this starving
pain,
And lift me up, so that I can be
With the little children around your
knee."

Things were not real to the starving
child,
And her eyes looked strangely fierce
and wild;
For fever burned in her throbbing head,
And all was queer that the sick child
said.

But, hark! sweet strains of music reach
her ear,
And she stops in her prayer that she
might hear.
With stiffened fingers she clings to the
sill,
While her eyes with hot tears slowly fill.

"Oh, take me now!" to the Christ she
cries,
"For the angels are singing in the
skies."
But it seemed her calling was all in vain,
For the Christ never moved on the
window-pane.

The last hymn was sung, and one by one
Out from the church the worshippers
came.
And the sick child now gives up in de-
spair
Of the Christ on the window hearing
her prayers.

When suddenly it seemed to her fevered
brain

That at last he was calling out of the
pane.

"Go call my angel-child," he said,

"For I have sent him to give you
bread."

His angel-child, ah, yes, she knew,
It must be the one with eyes of blue,
She had seen that day, and often before
Pass with the worshippers in the church
door.

So quickly she peeped around the wall
Clinging to the stones that she might
not fall,
Looking eagerly with eyes so wild
To catch the first glimpse of her angel-
child.

Ah, there he is with his eyes of blue.
And she calls as the Christ had told
her to.

He turns, he hears her pitiful cry,
And followed her back of the wall
close by.

"Oh, angel-child, will you give me
bread?"

She cried, as back in the snow she tread,
Quickly gliding behind the wall
When she saw he was coming at her
call.

"I'm not an angel-child," he said,
While in the deep snow he after her
tread.

"Oh, yes, you are," she quickly replied.
"For the Christ said so, and it can't
be denied."

"See! see the Christ, angel-child," she
cried,
Leaning up very close to his side,
And pointing with cramped little fingers
above
At the Christ to the children telling
his love.

"Oh, speak, angel-child, and tell me
why

He would not listen to my cry,
And why he left poor Nell below
And yet took mother long ago.

"But I'll send my angel-child," he said,
"And he will give you bread instead."
"Of course he will," the child replied,
"If you will just in me confide."

Then gently he led poor little Nell
In the warm church, where the sun-
beams fell
On the bright red carpet, that shed a
glow
On the two little children, as they go.

Slowly walking up the aisle,
When Nell's face suddenly lights with
a smile,
For she sees the Christ on the window-
pane
Looking down upon her again.

She stopped an instant filled with
awe,
For she never saw him so plainly be-
fore,
Clear and distinct he stands in the
light
Of the bright sunshine a thrilling sight.

She presses her hands to her throbbing
brow
And wonders if she is dreaming now.
Whether it all is as real as it seems,
For surely he was coming through the
bright sunbeams.

Down from the window 'mid the gold
and red,
That shimmered and gleamed about his
head,
And on the long white graceful gown
That hung in soft folds to the ground.

On, on, she gazed, and never knew
 She had been gently placed in a pew,
 And that the angel-child had said,
 "I'll come back soon and bring you
 bread."

Leaving her alone with the Christ above,
 Who she thought looked down with eyes
 of love,
 And was moving slowly through the
 light
 In a golden pathway clear and bright.

Her weary eyes never strayed away
 From the figure in the golden rays,
 As though afraid he would take his
 flight
 If for an instant he was lost to sight.

But he comes no nearer, though the
 time rolls by;
 Then she suddenly sobs and heaves a
 sigh.
 Her head falls back on the cushioned
 pew,
 And she wonders again if it is all true.

That he will not come, though it looked
 so plain
 That he walked straight from the win-
 dow-pane.
 And to her wandering mind even yet it
 seemed
 He still moved toward her, through the
 golden beams.

Yet strange, that though so long he
 walked,
 He came no nearer, and never talked
 As he seemed to when she stood by
 the wall
 And told her his angel-child to call.

She turned with a start, and wondered
 where
 The angel was, who brought her there.
 Was that too only a dream, after all?
 And had he really not come at her call?

O'er the vacant pews she looked around,
 But sees not a soul, and hears not a
 sound.

She presses her hand to her temples
 again,
 And tried to think through her clouded
 brain.

For it all seemed so real, yet how could
 it be

If the child who was there, now, she
 could not see.

For surely he had just a moment before
 Led her out of the snow and in the
 church door.

And the Christ who was coming to
 take her away

In his outstretched arms, to forever
 stay,

Draws not a step nearer, though he
 moved in the pane.

But it all was owing to her clouded
 brain

That all things quivered before her
 sight,

The radiant window in the bright sun-
 light,

And the painted flowers e'en on the
 wall

Would rise far above her, then down
 again fall.

And the brass chandeliers swayed to
 and fro

In glittering waves now high now low,
 Until nearly blind with the dazzling
 light

Nell closes her eyes to shut out the
 sight.

But, hark! was that the creak of a
 door?

And a step tripping lightly o'er the
 floor?

She started, and turned, and lo, 't was
 he,

Her angel-child, covered with snow to
 the knee.

And carrying a basket she quickly spied,
That filled her with raptures she could
not hide;

For the pangs of hunger made her wild
at the thought,

That in it could only be bread he had
brought.

Ah, yes, she had told him, now she was
sure,

That she was starving, sick, and poor.

And he had gone, of course, as the
Christ said he would,

To get her some bread as quick as he
could.

Won't you please, kind friends, buy a
book for Nell

I'm trying every day to sell.

To keep away that starving pain

She may not never know again.

ROY

You 'd have some fun if you knew Roy,
For he's just the jolliest boy.

Laughs and whistles from morn till
night

Thinks it great in wars to fight.

Words he uses, you never heard,
Can't write a line about a bird
Nor trees, and sunsets, things I love,
Never looks at the clouds above.

Hears not the music sweet and low
Of the running brook where we often
row.

Yet I know of a kind he 'd hear
Though a mile away 't would reach his
ear.

'T is rum-a-tum, rum-a-tum-tum
The loud deep music of the drum,
How his eyes sparkle at the sound
Makes him shout, and jump with a
bound.

Says a soldier he 'd like to be
And fight on both the land and sea,
Seems somehow we don't think alike
When we talk about wars and fights.

But he's so jolly and so gay
Could n't bother 'bout what I say;
Laughs and whistles from morn till
night

And all I know is — He's all right.

THE LILIES

Oh, dainty little blossoms wonderfully
made,

Sweet lily of the valley growing in the
shade,

How delicate thy perfume, none other
can compare

With a fragrance so delicious, so won-
derful and rare.

Folded in a leafy cradle how lovingly
they lay,

Shielded in the soft green folds from
the sun's hot rays.

The spring with all its flowers never
seems to me complete

Till I see the little lilies from their soft
green cradles peep.

MY SISTER GRACE

THERE 's a flower grows in our garden
here,

That blooms every day throughout the
whole year,

No other in the world can with it com-
pare,

So dainty, so graceful, so wondrously
fair.

In the fall when others droop and fade,
This one you will find just as gayly
arrayed

As when the sparkling little drops of dew
Made the summer flowers look fresh
and new.

Under warmer skies you will oft see it
white,
Tinted with colors that change over
night.
One day the soft petals will be streaked
with pale blue,
Then another you will see it a pinkish
hue.

But under the winter's cold leaden
skies,
When through leafless trees the wind
moans and sighs,
And our hearts long for something
bright and gay
To remind us of summer days long
passed away,

'T is then it will wear a warm crimson
shade,
Edged with soft down just newly made,
So to shed all about it a glow so
bright
That the winter days will be to us as
bright.

As those in June, when the roses grew,
And the earth was green, and the sky
was blue.
When the birds sang merrily all day
long
In their leafy trees, their joyous songs.

But it matters not how the cold wind
blows,
Or how deep on the ground lies the
midwinter snows.
More radiant than ever, it springs with
a bound
From behind the great snowdrifts,
piled high on the ground.

And we hear no more the wind's mourn-
ful sound,
Or mind in the least the snow-covered
ground,
For we think summer's here to see the
laughing face
Of this rare little flower, — My sister
Grace.

THE FLOWERS

THE flowers, I love them every one,
All plants and trees that ever were
known.

The hedges that grow by the roadside
fence,

The trailing vines with the sweetest of
scents.

I love the cool grass beneath my feet.
The plainest flower is to me so sweet.
The graceful fern on its slender stem
Is to my eyes a perfect gem.

E'en the daisies and buttercups' praises
I sing,
For many a new thought they did
bring,
As I examined closely their petals
small,
Found them wonderfully made as flow-
ers all.

Though the garden flowers are so dear
to me,
Yet how often I love to wander
Through woods and dells for a wild
flower free,
Or a field of sweet-smelling clover.

AN AUGUST TWILIGHT

THE sun's last rays are slowly sinking
In the western sky.
One by one the stars are peeping
From their realms on high.

The leafy boughs are softly sighing,
As to and fro they sway,
The cattle in the fields are lying,
Seeking rest with the dying day.

Perched on fence and low-spread
bough

The barn-yard fowl are snugly tucked,
With heads all hidden in feathers deep,
Are ready for their nightly sleep.

The parent-bird has sung good-night
And rests with nestlings small.
The house-dog dozes in the mellow
light,
While over all the night shades fall.

BRIDGET'S WEDDING DAY

RING, ye bells, pour forth your lay,
For this is Bridget's wedding day.
Beat, ye drum, and toot, ye horn,
For this is not a day to mourn.

Dance, ye people, and laugh with glee,
And be as happy as the bumble-bee.
If it 's only for the night, be bright,
For we don't have weddings every night.

May she always happy be,
And with Mike never disagree.
I hope she will ne'er again
Wish she was Bridget Flanagan.

CHAPTER XVII

ONE morning, while Paul was on his way to the station, he passed Dr. Barlow in his carriage; he was a neighboring physician. He always bowed to him whenever he saw him, which was quite frequently, but so far he never had had an opportunity to talk with him. He and his wife had called at the house one evening since they came to Avondale, but Paul had retired, so missed meeting him. He had often wished for an opportunity to talk with him, for his face always reminded him of Dr. Andrews. They had exchanged the usual greeting on this particular day, when like a flash the thought dawned upon him to consult him about Nell. His first impulse was to call after him, but the horse was on a brisk trot, and the distance between them too great for him to be heard. Then he decided he would call at his office on his return from school.

He knew where he resided, for he passed his house every time he went to Mill Hollow. His name could be seen plainly on one of the posts of the porch from the road. He regretted that he had not thought of this before, for all sick people ought to have a physician. They always had one at Glenwood Home for the poor children, and he wondered how he could have neglected anything so important.

On his return that day he went immediately to Dr. Barlow's house. He pulled the bell with several quick

jerks, which was soon answered by a maid, who told him the doctor was not in, but had he any message to leave?

Paul hesitated a moment, busily thinking what would be best to do.

"I will send him to the house if you say so," she continued.

"I think I would rather see him myself," said Paul; "and if you do not think he will be very long, I will come in and wait."

"Sometimes he steps in for a moment to see if any messages have been left, so you might come in for a while, if you don't mind waiting," she said, which invitation Paul readily accepted.

The sliding doors were open wide between the office and the waiting-room, and Paul could see the bright fire in the grate and the armchair close by it. He wondered if the doctor would care if he went in and took possession of it for a little while, for he felt cold and tired, and longed to snuggle down in the soft folds of the easy-chair which looked so inviting by the bright glowing coals.

He took off his overcoat and leggins, and laying them with his hat on a chair, walked in and sat down, with his legs crossed and his head thrown back. He thought of poor Nell, and wondered if Dr. Barlow could cure her, and if his bill would be a very large one. "When he finds out how poor she is, I am sure he will not charge much," he thought, "and I can pay it by selling books. I will make them all the time, and I will soon have lots of money for everything. If I wrote to Dr. Andrews about her, perhaps he would send some money for her, but I guess I had better not, for Aunt

Helen might not like me to do that." Had a fairy suddenly touched the coals in the grate with her magic wand? For they are undergoing a most wonderful change, as he gazed with half-closed eyes at the little leaping flames. They were turning into trees, and, yes, the very trees that grew at Beechwood too. He could not forget them, and then he saw the creek and, what is more surprising, he was walking close beside it, and it was all a mistake that he had ever left his beautiful home. Why, it must have been a dream. He heard a familiar voice, and turning, he saw Dr. Andrews coming across the little bridge with outstretched arms, and with a bound he was folded to his heart.

"How glad I am to have you back, my boy!" he said, and Paul felt so happy but for one thing; he had left a little beggar girl somewhere starving, with no one to look after her; and so he dreamed all alone in the doctor's easy-chair.

The sun was fast going down, and only a faint glimmer came through the mullioned windows. The maid entered to make a light, and seeing the sleeping child, turned it down dimly and passed out quietly, leaving him undisturbed.

It was after five when the doctor stopped to see if any messages had been left. The maid met him in the hall, and said, "There's a little boy waiting for you, sir, and he has fallen asleep in your chair." He walked back to the other end of the hall and opened a door that led directly into his private office. He stood still for a moment, with his hand on the door-knob, when he saw the beautiful picture before him. Then carefully he closed the door and stepped lightly over the floor, until he stood directly before the little sleeper. The light

from the grate shone full on his face and the golden hair that encircled it. The doctor thought he had never seen such clear-cut features, white skin, and long drooping lashes.

"It is a shame to awaken him," he thought; "he must have been very tired to sleep so heavily, but there may be some one very ill at home waiting for me." So thinking, he rattled the coals in a scuttle that stood near the grate, then stooped over the chair just in time to see a pair of blue-gray eyes meet his gaze. The next instant two arms were thrown around his neck, and a childish voice said, "Oh, Dr. Andrews, I am so glad to see you again." But immediately Paul realized his mistake and knew he had been asleep and dreaming, and it was Dr. Barlow bending over him, whom he had come to see. Quickly he unwound his arms, rubbed his eyes, and jumped from the chair, saying, "Oh, please excuse me. I thought you were Dr. Andrews when I first opened my eyes, because you look so much like him, and I was dreaming about him." Then Paul gave a little nervous laugh.

"I am very sorry to be forced to disturb you," said Dr. Barlow, pleasantly, seating himself on the chair and drawing Paul down on his knee. "But I thought perhaps some one might be ill at the house and anxious to see me."

"No one is ill at our house, but I came to see you about a poor little girl who lives down in Mill Hollow," said Paul, speaking very earnestly. "I found her one Sunday by the church, nearly frozen, and starving. It was very sad to see her, because she was so sick, and a fever burned in her head that made her talk queer, and she thought the Christ on the church window was alive

and she called me 'Angel child.' ” (And again he gave that little nervous laugh.) “ But she did not know what she was saying, and it was all on account of the fever.” Then Paul related the whole story of poor little Nell, while the doctor quietly listened.

He noted the unusual sympathy that was felt by the little speaker for the friendless child he was telling about. He also observed that his nerves were greatly unstrung, owing to this very fact, and judged that he must have been under a great strain of some kind, which, in all probability, was connected with the beggar child.

By the time the tale was finished, the doctor was better acquainted with Paul, and understood him more fully than many who had known him all his life.

“ Why, certainly I will go down to see the child,” he said, drawing the tired little head against his breast as he spoke, and smoothing tenderly his broad white brow. “ I will do whatever I can for her, but I am afraid that you are worrying yourself sick about this unfortunate child.”

“ No, indeed,” spoke up Paul, quickly, “ I am not at all sick, I only feel tired sometimes ; and sometimes,” he said, hesitatingly, “ I cry when I don't know it.”

“ Ah, yes, I understand all about it,” said the doctor, shaking his head ; “ your little brain and nerves are being overtaxed, and you must not think so much about this little beggar ; it is not good for you. I will go to see her to-morrow ; and if you will stop about this time, I will tell you what I think of her.

“ Who is this Dr. Andrews you took me for ? ”

“ Don't you know Dr. Andrews ? ” asked Paul, in surprise, “ why, I thought every one knew who he was ; he

is the minister who lives right next door to my old home, Beechwood, and works for the poor. I have known him ever since I was a baby, and he is my greatest friend. I did not want to leave him and Beechwood, but you see it could n't be helped, because Beechwood had to be sold on account of the panic."

"I must go now," he said, suddenly jumping up; "it must be very late, and Aunt Helen will wonder where I am."

"I am going past your house," said the doctor, "so will take you in my carriage."

When Paul stepped out in front of their gate, he turned to the doctor, and said, "If Nell says anything about 'angel child,' don't tell her there is n't any here, because that makes her nervous. You see, she takes me for an angel, and thinks the Christ on the window sent me to take care of her, and it seems to make her so happy, so I let her think so. Don't you think that is best when any one has fever?"

"Certainly it would not do to contradict one in such a condition," said Dr. Barlow, smiling at Paul's earnestness. "It is surely a comforting illusion, and it would not be wise to try to dispel it, if she is in the weak state I imagine from your description."

Hulda stood in the doorway when Paul arrived, and ran to meet him, covering him with hugs and kisses.

"Oh, Master Paul, you have given us an awful fright staying away so late, and your aunt is nearly wild with grief. She has gone off in search of you, and by this time I guess she is in the city at the police station. Where have you been? — tell me," she asked, as Paul was too scared to speak when he heard of all the trouble he had so unconsciously caused.

"I only stopped at Dr. Barlow's to send him to a sick child, and he was n't in, so I waited for him."

"What sick child do you know, Master Paul, that you have to bother sending a doctor to them?" asked Hulda, taking off his coat and leggins, for she noticed how tired he looked, as he sat down in the hall, making no attempt to take them off himself.

"There was nobody else to go for him, so I had to," said Paul, his eyes filling with tears. "Oh, dear, dear! I am sorry I did not come first and tell Aunt Helen. She will not find me in the city, and what will she do? Let me put my coat on again, Hulda, and go after her! Maybe I can find her."

"No, indeed, Master Paul, don't think of it! You are safe now, and I'm going to keep you right under my eye. You might miss her, anyhow, and it would only be a fool's errand. There is nothing to do, now, but wait her return. Poor little dear, you look so tired, and, I am afraid, not feeling well."

"I hope it is n't for the beggar child you found by the church that Sunday, is it?" she asked.

"Yes, it is, and she may be dying, for a lady told me she would not live through the winter."

It did not then occur to Hulda that he had been to Mill Hollow, but had met some one on the street who knew something about the beggar child, and had given him the news, and told him to send the doctor to see her.

Hulda then went out into the kitchen to finish preparations for their evening meal, and Paul stood at the window, peering out in the darkness for a glimpse of his Aunt Helen. Roy slipped up close to him, and said, "Aunt Helen is awful mad, Perseffer. She was hoppin'

and hoppin' about here, and scolding all the time. She said she would ask at the station first if any one saw you, and if they did n't, I think she was going to the brewery [bureau] of police, and send them all out after you. She thought maybe you had found another organ-grinder, and had gone home with him."

Baby Grace stepped up close to the other side of him, and slipped her little hand in his, knowing he needed sympathy, and felt very angry with Roy that he should say such awful things.

"My bruver Paul is dood now, and he wood n't doe away wiv anoder ordin-drinder," she said, shaking her head, and her eyes flashing, as she looked at Roy.

"No, I would n't have done that," said Paul, placing his arm around her, "but I am sorry I did not come home first, and tell Aunt Helen. Oh, dear me! how angry she will be, and I guess it was my fault, too."

His eyes filled with tears again, and Grace leaned up very close to him, and said, "Is you dawn to cry, Bruver Paul?"

"Oh, no, I am not going to cry," he replied, biting his lip, and making desperate efforts to force back the tears. "You see, Robin, I am only very sorry that I worried Aunt Helen so much."

"Jes betause you went for a dotter for a sick 'ittle dirl?"

"No, not only for that, but because I did not let her know I had returned from school. I just wish I could go after her."

"Baby Drace don't want you to do out in er dark night; she will tome soon, and 'en she will find Bruver Paul home adain, and not out at all, won't she?" and

Grace smiled, and looked up into his face to see if there was any response to her comforting words.

"Is er 'ittle dirl dawn to die who wants a dotter?"

"I am afraid she is, but maybe he can cure her, and that is why I wanted to send him to see her."

"And will she go to heaven with baby Martin, if she dies?"

"Yes, of course she will."

"What do all er dead peoples do to heaven for when 'ey dies, Bruver Paul? Is it the only place they can find? Is it the Heaven World?"

"Yes, it is the beautiful Heaven World, where nobody has any pain or troubles," said Paul.

"An' if er 'ittle dirl dies, will 'ey have a petty white shash tied on 'er door-bell, like 'ey had for baby Martin?"

At that instant Paul gave a leap, and clapping his hands for very joy, ran to the door, opened it, and ran down the path toward his aunt and threw his arms about her as she entered the gate.

"Oh, do not be cross with me, Aunt Helen, please don't," he implored; "I know it was wrong to stay away so late, but I fell asleep in the doctor's chair, and then when he came, I had to talk to him about a sick child."

"You need not get so excited, Paul," said Aunt Helen. "Just let me in and get my wraps off first, and then I will listen to the whole story. I am completely exhausted and almost sick with the fright you have given me."

"Oh, I am so glad to see you back again," said Hulda, coming in from the kitchen, to help her off with wraps and overshoes; "you did not have time to get all the way to the city, did you?"

"No, very fortunately, after inquiring of a dozen persons, I finally came across a gentleman at the station, who said he saw a boy with light curls go into Dr. Barlow's house, and I made immediately for that place, and learned from the maid that Paul had been there a long time, waiting for the doctor, then went away with him in his carriage.

"I thanked her, and hurried back, and here I am, just about worn out.

"Now what have you to say for yourself, Paul?" she said quite sternly.

Paul shivered from head to foot; his nerves were completely unstrung, and he thought it was now surely all up with him doing anything more for Nell, which to him was a calamity almost too overpowering to bear.

It was enough to melt a heart of stone to watch him as he stood trembling, his eyes filled with unshed tears, trying to think of something to say to defend himself and Nell.

Aunt Helen had a strong desire to fold him in her arms and speak more kindly to him, but she restrained the impulse, for, after all, that would only be encouraging him in a wrong act, she thought, and for the child's good, "I must be stern, and let him understand that I thoroughly disapprove of these things," for she felt sure that it must be all connected with the poor little child he found by the church.

He was just about to speak, when Hulda said, "A woman told him that the little beggar girl would n't live through the winter, and must have a doctor, so I suppose he went off straight for Dr. Barlow. He did not think he would be so long, Miss Helen, but he fell asleep in the doctor's chair."

"Well, no wonder you do not want to speak," said Aunt Helen, though in a milder tone, "when it is about those wretched beggars again. I thought as much; and all I have to say is, I might as well give up trying to do anything with you in that respect; I am afraid it is a hopeless task."

Baby Grace was actually crying in sympathy for Paul, as she listened to the dreadful scolding he was getting. She stepped up close to her aunt and said quite low, —

"But er 'ittle dirl is dawn to heaven soon, 'tause she is sick, and had no dotter to div her melisen."

Even jolly Roy had been quite subdued by the scene, and felt very sorry for Paul, who so far had said nothing, but stood trembling and looking so sad, the very picture of despair.

It seemed to Roy somehow there was a big fuss being made about a very small matter; presently he said, —

"Oh, well, let him be a minute, Aunt Helen. Mother never scolded him, and I guess you have about a million times since she went away!"

This remark made Aunt Helen feel very badly indeed. The idea of merry Roy, even, looking upon her, perhaps, as a common scold, when she thought they were the very best of friends; and she was only trying, after all, to do her duty by them.

She sat for a moment with her face in her hands and made no reply to Roy's words.

Suddenly, in the midst of the stillness, Paul rushed over to her chair and threw his arms about her neck and said, —

"Oh, I am so sorry I worry you all the time, Aunt Helen, dear. I don't want to do it. I am sad all the

time when I think of it; but you know Mother loves the poor, and is always helping them, and I must be like her; I cannot help it. Is it wrong to do what mothers think right and aunts think wrong?"

Aunt Helen could resist no longer; she drew Paul down on her lap and kissed him and wiped the tears from his lashes as she said, —

"Don't you know, Paul, it is only for your own good that I try to keep you from so much unnecessary trouble that you give yourself when you see a beggar? You think too much about them, that is all, whenever you come in contact with any forlorn creature. It affects your health, too, to be so intensely sympathetic."

"But it would affect me more if I saw them and couldn't do anything for them," continued Paul.

"Well, try, Paul dear, not to think too much about them, will you? because I know it can have no good effect on a nature like yours to be forever following them up, and listening to their tales of woe."

"I will promise to try not to think so much about them that it will make me sick," said Paul, earnestly; "but poor little Nell, I know you would be sorry for her if you saw her. She is very sick and cannot live."

"Well, come now," said Aunt Helen, "don't let us talk any more about her: we must go out to supper; Hulda is tired of waiting."

Paul was very much pleased the next morning to find Nell propped up in the cot, looking brighter and more natural than he had yet seen her.

Mrs. Stein had also tried to make some improvements in the room. She had put up white muslin curtains at the windows, and bought a cheap strip of carpet that lay by the side of the bed.

She had been fortunate enough to get the wash of two families in Avondale, the past two weeks; so that her financial condition was much improved, making her income, with the money Paul brought, ranging from eight to ten dollars a week.

"My little friendt, I was schoost dinking if I could save somedings for a new mattress for de chile, I t'ink she be more comfable," she said to Paul, on this particular morning.

"Is it very hard?" asked Paul.

"Yah, it vos, und der straw vos all in lumps, und I can't do noddings mit it."

"Straw!" exclaimed Paul, in amazement. "Is she lying on a mattress made of straw? I never heard of one before."

"My! my! mein leetle friendt! der poor shleeps on nodding else."

"Well, how much would a good comfortable one cost, do you think?"

"Vell, for dot bed I tink a goot von be bout drei dollar."

"How much is drei dollar?"

"Drei, drei tollar, vos ein, zwei, drei," said Mrs. Stein, counting three fingers off and holding them up.

"Oh, I see, three dollars. Well, I will try to get one, Mrs. Stein, so you need n't try to save anything for it. I did not know her bed was so hard, and it must be dreadful to be very sick and not have a comfortable one." And so that very day, instead of taking the little time he had to sell books, he hunted up a furniture store.

"Have you any nice comfortable mattresses for a sick child?" he asked of the man who stepped forward to wait on him as he entered the store.

He smiled at Paul's question, and wondered who would send so young a child to purchase a mattress.

"Yes, we have some very comfortable ones, my little man, any size you want," he said kindly.

"Well! what would one cost to fit a cot?"

"Well, a comfortable mattress to fit a cot, made with the best materials, would be about six dollars."

"Six dollars," gasped Paul. It almost took his breath, for he wondered how he could ever make that amount over the regular expenses, and the doctor's bill would come later on. It was impossible; he surely could not manage it. The price so staggered him for a time that he could not speak. Finally he said, the tears coming to his eyes, and in a faltering voice, "Thank you, sir, but I can't afford that," and was turning to leave, when Mr. Harvey (the owner of the store) said, "Come back, my little man, and let me see if I can get one up cheaper for you that would be comfortable as well."

"Oh, could you?" said Paul, clasping his hands and swallowing a lump in his throat as he turned back on hearing this kind offer.

"Why, certainly I could," he replied, becoming very much interested and determined if possible to find out who he was, and why he should be coming alone to purchase a mattress for a cot.

"If you will be kind enough to tell me who this mattress is for, perhaps I can make the price satisfactory to you."

"Oh, could you, sir?" asked Paul, in great earnestness, with the tears that he seemed hardly aware of, glistening still on his long lashes, so absorbed was he to know the outcome of this important bargain.

"Sit down, child," he said, handing him a chair.

"You look very tired." Paul did as requested, then said: "It is all for Nell, sir, a poor sick child I found cold and starving by the church. She had no one to love her, no one to take care of her, and she came to the church to die there. A poor German woman tried to take care of her, but she had no work, and her husband is dead. She could hardly feed her own children, and Nell could n't stay with her, and one day when she had fever, she walked to the church in the snow, and talked to the Christ on the window-pane. She thought He was alive. Then when she saw me, she called me 'angel child.' You see, she did n't know what she was saying, so I took her back to the German woman, who has some work now, and I take her money every week for Nell. She is getting better, but her bed is so hard, — all in lumps of straw that hurt her badly, — and I wanted to buy her a new one. But I have n't enough money for a six-dollar one, and another straw one would n't do, you see."

Mr. Harvey was deeply touched while he listened to Paul relate the story of little Nell, for he seemed to feel every word he spoke, and like Dr. Barlow, he saw the child's sympathy was so great for the little beggar girl it was making him quite nervous.

"Who gives you money to take to the German woman?" he asked.

"I make the money by selling books of poetry," replied Paul.

"By selling books of poetry?" said Mr. Harvey, more and more astonished. "What sort of books are they?"

"Oh, only little books I made, then put in them some poetry I made too. And here is one if you would like to buy it," continued Paul, taking one from his bag and

handing it to him. It happened to be one with forget-me-nots on, of which he made more than of any other.

"Certainly I will buy one," he said, thinking it was the most pathetic incident he had ever heard for so young a child to interest himself to such an extent in a poor forlorn beggar to make little books of poetry, and then sell them for her support.

"Do your parents know you are doing this?"

"My parents are in France, and I have not written about it to them yet; and my Aunt Helen, who takes care of us, does not love the poor, so I could not tell her anything about it."

"Well, I will tell you, my little man, just what I think about it all, and I hope you will take the advice of an old man. Tell some older person about the child, or the minister in your church. He would surely see into it, for there are always charitable organizations connected with churches, and let them see that this neglected child is cared for. You have taken too much upon your shoulders for one so young. I will do my share for her by buying a book, and sending her a new mattress, bed, and pillow for a present."

"Oh, sir, do you really mean it?" said Paul, actually throwing his arms around Mr. Harvey's neck, not knowing what to do to express his joy and gratefulness for so generous a gift.

"You are a born philanthropist," said Mr. Harvey, clasping the dear child to his heart. He was a very affectionate man, and extremely fond of children, but he had never before met one like this little customer.

"What does that word mean?" asked Paul.

"Philanthropist?"

"Yes."

"Why, it is a name applied to one who is always doing something to help the poor along."

"I like that word," said Paul, laughing, his heart feeling very light again with so pleasant a prospect in view, of seeing Nell placed in a brand-new bed, with a comfortable mattress and pillow.

"They call me at home a poet, and sometimes a philosopher," said Paul; "but I like your word best of all, because that is what I want to do when I'm a man, — take care of the poor."

"You must try, then, to grow up to be a strong one, if that is to be your vocation," said Mr. Harvey; "and be sure and take my advice about consulting some one older to help you in this matter, or you might wear yourself out and not live to be a man."

"Oh, it is no trouble. I love to make the books, and they sell right away. Some people are always waiting for me. I guess those who buy them tell their friends, and then they come to the corner where I always stand. But I must hurry now, or I shall miss my train, and shall have to take a later one, and that would worry Aunt Helen."

"Stop in soon again, and tell me how the little sick girl likes her bed, will you?"

"Yes, I will stop in whenever I have time," said Paul, and shaking hands in his old-fashioned but polite manner, he left Mr. Harvey standing at the door looking after him, and thinking it had been many a day since he had been so delightfully entertained by a customer, and hoping he would call in to see him soon again.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE people in Mill Hollow opened their eyes wide indeed, when they saw one morning a large furniture wagon stop in front of the tenement where Mrs. Stein lived, and a beautiful iron bed, painted white, a new mattress and pillow, carried in for Nell Myers. A number of children stood around when the driver stepped down and read from a card, "Nell Myers, in care of Mrs. Stein, No. 17 Mill Street."

"This is it! This is it!" several shouted, pointing to the house, while the driver walked up to try to make out the faded number over the door.

"Mrs. Stein lives on the third floor, mister," said a little girl.

"All right, missy; show me the way," and shortly all was landed in Mrs. Stein's room. The man put the bed up for her, and she arranged it all in readiness for Nell before rolling it in the other room.

Paul had stopped there and told her of its coming, and the poor woman was as pleased as if it had been for herself.

"Dot vos a fine bed, mein leetle friendt, und der mattress und pillow vos soft und comforble. She sleebed goot last night. Dot vos von peautiful bresent, und dot shentleman vos goot dot dake no money for it," said Mrs. Stein, as Paul appeared at the door the next morning.

"Yes, he was very good," said Paul, "and everybody is so kind. I stopped at the doctor's yesterday, and he told me he could not tell how long Nell would live. She might live a month, and she might live five or six. But you give her medicine, don't you, as often as he said?"

"Yah, I do; I von't forget dot. I do always vat he say, for dot doctor vos anodder goot shentleman, und giv me ten dollar to py t'ings for her to eat, — oranges, grapes, und all dem goot t'ings."

"Do you mean Dr. Barlow gave you ten dollars in money?" asked Paul, scarcely believing he heard aright.

"Yah, dot vos vat I say, und some day he give me more ven dot go, he say."

"Why, I think he gets kinder every day, and he is more and more like my old friend Dr. Andrews," said Paul.

"Vos dot so?" said Mrs. Stein, not having the least idea who his old friend Dr. Andrews was. "Vell, all I got to say ish dish about dot shentleman, dot he vos like von goot kind father und I love him, and do always vat he say."

"Good-morning, Nell," Paul said, as he entered the inner room after this conversation, and took one of her hands, as was his custom, for she always held them out toward him as soon as she saw him.

"I am glad you came, angel child. Won't you stay?" she asked, for Paul's visits were always so very short, and he rarely ever sat down, but stood by Nell's bedside during the few minutes of his call.

"I am sorry, but I cannot stay. Some day maybe I can; I go to school now, and must catch the train, you

know. How nice you look in your new bed! Is it comfortable?"

"Oh, it is so soft, and my back don't hurt near so much. You are good to send it to me, angel child." She always called him by the same name, even when she was rational, and seemed to think he was sent in answer to her prayer. His visits were indeed like angels' visits to the suffering child, and she knew that all the good things she was enjoying came from him, and she was content to wait until the Christ was ready to call her, as long as she was being cared for by His little messenger.

"Will you sing sometime about those angels?" she asked.

"I will sing now, if you would like to hear me," said Paul, "then I must go right off."

"Oh, will you sing for me right away, angel child?"

Immediately Paul began, his voice a little weak and trembling at first, but growing stronger as he went along, still holding Nell's hand, as he stood close by the side of the bed.

"Angels ever bright and fair,
Take, oh, take me to thy care,"

was what he sang; the same that Nell listened to in the church.

When he finished, he simply said, "I must say good-bye now. Perhaps I can sing more the next time I come." Nell only smiled in answer; and as he passed out of the room, Mrs. Stein was wiping a tear from her eye with her calico apron.

To think of Nell dying, did n't have such terrors for him as it had at first, for Dr. Barlow had talked in such a beautiful way about it, and made it appear to him in

a different light altogether. "It will be to Nell just like going to a beautiful bright home after being out in the cold and dark," he had said. "She is only too glad to go, and is looking now with her spiritual eyes, my boy; and what might seem dark and gloomy to us, to her is all clear and bright, and she is so eager to go, you would not want to keep her here suffering, when she can never get well, would you?"

"No, I would n't want to keep her if she always had to suffer and wanted to go," said Paul, feeling satisfied now that Dr. Barlow was right, and that Nell would be far better off if she were taken.

"Then if you should hear at any time that she had been called away, you will never worry or grieve over the fact, but only be glad that she has gone home at last with her mother, and is free from all her suffering," said Dr. Barlow, as he tried to prepare Paul for the news he would hear one day sooner or later.

"Why, no, I will not worry at all when I hear it, if she will be happier and have no more pain," he said, his face brightening.

Dr. Barlow knew nothing of the selling of the books, for Paul had never mentioned it to any one in Avondale, and when Mrs. Stein told him about his visits, and bringing money his family sent every week, he thought Paul's Aunt Helen was extremely charitable, and yet wondered that she was not afraid to send him with it so frequently to such a miserable place as Mill Hollow.

One day Paul stopped at Nell's in the afternoon on his way home, school having been dismissed for some reason at an earlier hour that day, and he took advantage of the opportunity to make a longer call, taking an

earlier train and getting off at Fall Brook Station, which was only a short distance from Mill Hollow.

Mrs. Stein met him at the door with raised finger, and said in a whisper, "Der chile ish not so vell, leetle friendt. She vos wake haf der night mit dot awful cough und did n't sleebe, und der doctor tell me she will not live long, pecause she vos very weak."

"I am very sorry," said Paul, "but she wants to go home, Mrs. Stein, for it is all cold and dark to her here, and she can see a more beautiful world than this, because she is looking with her spiritual eyes." He went on, remembering Dr. Barlow's words, but poor Mrs. Stein hardly comprehended, so just shook her head and said, "So! So! Och, my! Och, my! it vos sad. Der fever is on now, leetle friendt, und she talk about dot Christ und angel chile all der time, und she loog so queer mit her eyes, but cum in und see her," and without a word, Paul followed. Walking on tiptoe, she carefully turned the knob of the door, and peeped cautiously in, and, seeing Nell was awake, motioned to Paul, and together they entered the room. Mrs. Stein's oldest child Louisa was sitting by the bed, always in charge of the sick room when her mother could not be present.

"You have come! You have come, angel child," said Nell, excitedly, as soon as she saw Paul.

"Have you been watching for me?" he asked.

"Yes, I've been watching for a long while. I wanted to tell you I heard Mother calling last night, and I thought she had taken me in her arms, but she went away again and left me. Why did she do that, angel child?"

Paul did not know how to answer at first. He was

quite affected by Nell's words and her labored breathing, but she was waiting, looking eagerly up in his face, while he blinked his eyes very fast, and tried to think of something to say.

"Oh, she will take you some day, Nell," he finally said; "perhaps she is n't ready for you to go yet."

"But she ought to take me when I am ready," said Nell, her breath coming in quick, short gasps. "She cannot be far away, though, for sometimes I see her, angel child, and she is so near. Don't forget to tell Father, if you ever see him, all I told you, will you?"

"No, I will not forget. I have it all written down on paper," answered Paul; "maybe I will go to-night and won't see you here again, angel child, but you'll be up there, won't you?"

"I hope I shall," replied Paul.

"Tell me what it is like, angel child; that beautiful city you know, where you come from."

Again Paul was puzzled, not knowing what to say, and scarcely able to talk for the emotion caused by Nell's pitiable condition and flighty talk. But finally he controlled himself, for he had a remarkably strong will, and he suddenly thought of a little story he had once read called "Gates Ajar." That described a little child finding her way to heaven. After days of weary wanderings she finally saw two beautiful gates loom up before her, that almost dazzled her eyes with their brilliancy, being of gold and inlaid with costly jewels. They stood ajar, as though waiting for her to enter, and as she stepped in, filled with awe at so much grandeur, two beautiful angels met her and placed a crown on her head. The gates were closed again. Then it described all that she saw and heard in this wonderful city.

"Perhaps if I tell her something about that story, it might please her," thought Paul. So he cleared his throat and began: "No one can tell just how beautiful that city is until they get there. We cannot think of anything so fair as heaven. Just think of the most beautiful spot in this world not comparing with it. I have read that the gates are of pearl and gold, studded with jewels, and if you are good, you will find them ajar waiting for you to enter. Then angels come and place a crown on your head, and put a pure white robe on you, and they take you by the hand and lead you right in among hundreds and thousands of angels, and you hear sweet singing and harps playing softly. And the angels say, 'Welcome home, my child. Come, take this harp and sing with us;' and no matter if you never knew how to play on one before, somehow you can then, just like the angels, and soon you will find yourself singing with them too, as though you had always been there."

Nell listened intently to catch every word, and a happy smile spread over her face, as she thought she was going to that place he was describing, to do just what the angels did.

"Tell me more! more, angel child," she said, when he finished.

"To-morrow I will, but not to-day. I must go home now."

"To-morrow! to-morrow!" repeated Nell, absently, "that is a long, long way off, angel child."

"Oh, no, it is not very long, Nell; it will soon be here," said Paul.

"But if I'm not here you will know, angel child, where I am, won't you?" and as Nell spoke these words, she

closed her eyes and sank back exhausted among the pillows.

Paul was very tired when he reached home, in fact, so much so that his little knees actually trembled and seemed scarcely able to support him when he walked up the path.

Roy was just coming out of the door, with his treasure bag hanging on his arm.

"Hello, Perseffer," he said, "I'm going out to make a call. Don't you want to come with me?"

"I am too tired to make calls," replied Paul. "Besides, I have n't had any dinner."

"I'll come in and wait until you eat some if you'll come," said Roy, coaxingly. "I told Mr. Timothy Jenks I would bring you sometime, for he wants to see you right close. He could n't tell what you looked like, he said, when you passed his house; you were too far away."

"I'll go some other day. I'm too tired," persisted Paul.

"No, you're not. Eat some dinner, then you'll be strong."

"Why, yes, go with him," said Aunt Helen, hearing Roy's persuasions, as he followed Paul into the house. "They are very fond of children, and seem to enjoy Roy's visits so much. Besides, we will not take our long walk this afternoon; it looks like snow, and is very cold and windy."

Paul said nothing more, but quietly ate his dinner, then reluctantly joined Roy to make a neighborly call.

"He's a jolly old feller. I know you'll like Mr. Timothy Jenks," said Roy, as they walked along.

"How did you get acquainted with him?" asked Paul.

"Why, don't you know, I was walking by, the day we came here, and I stopped for a minute to look in their gate, and I saw a jolly old lady sitting on the porch, knitting. She called me in and asked me to take a seat, and if I was one of the little new neighbors. I said 'Yes, I'm a new neighbor, but I'm not very little.' That made her laugh, and then an old man came hobbling out with a stick to see what she was laughing about, and, oh, my! his face was as red as blood, and his eyebrows looked like two big yellow caterpillars, and he had a big ulcer [ulcer] on his cheek. Then he looked so grumpy, just like an old bull, and this is the way he walked, Persef—look." Paul turned his eyes, then Roy stooped over, turned his feet in, and made his legs shake as he imitated poor Timothy Jenks with his rheumatic gout.

"He grunted and groaned so when he sat down, Persef, that I thought he would explode, for his face got redder and redder, and he said, 'Who have we here, Susannah?' and he pointed right at me with his cane, and that made me mad. 'This is one of our new neighbors, Timothy,' she said, 'but don't frighten him by looking so fierce.'

"He gave a grunt, just like a pig, and made his caterpillar eyebrows go way up on his forehead, which was awful high; it went all the way to the back of his head, and just a little fringe of hair was down by his neck.

"'Come here to me, Captain,' he said. I went to him, because I knew he meant me, but I said, 'I am not a captain yet, but I belong to the Knights of Pityus Club, and some day they will make me one.'

"Well, Persef, that made him laugh till he cried, and

Mrs. Jenks laughed too. I laughed, and we all laughed together. He was jolly after that, and I liked him better. After awhile he went in again, and Mrs. Jenks said, 'You must n't mind him when he grunts and groans, because he has been very ill, and has the gout, and last winter had nervous posturation, and that makes him a little cross.' I was sorry for him then, Persef, because he must have awful pains. I told Mrs. Jenks I did n't mind him, 'cause she seemed worried about what I'd think about him. I told her if she would put a plaster on him, like Pat used, he would get better; and if that would n't do any good, to try Leatricity [Electricity]; that's a fine thing for rheumatism too, Pat said so. That's why I'm taking my bag. I want to show him the kind of plaster Pat used when he had the rheumatism in his shoulder. Do you think they would laugh if I showed them all my klektion of curosties," he asked in a very solemn voice, just as they entered Mr. Jenks's gate.

"I don't know, Roy," replied Paul. "If I was acquainted with them, maybe I could tell. Some people, you know, laugh at nothing, and some never laugh at things they ought to laugh at."

"Maybe I better just show him the plaster; 'cause, you know, if he was so imperlite as to laugh at my elegant curosties, I would just be so mad I'd never go to his house again, and it's fine here," he continued, in a whisper, as Paul rang the bell. "They give me lemonade, ginger cakes, and lots of good things."

The maid ushered them into the library, where, as usual, sat Mr. Jenks with a paper, and Mrs. Jenks with her knitting.

"Good-afternoon," said Roy, as he stepped in ahead

of Paul. "This is my brother, the Perseffer. He writes beautiful verses, and takes care of organ-grinders, and all the poor."

Paul blushed at this introduction, as he stepped forward to shake hands with Mrs. Jenks, then her grumpy husband, in such a polite and courteous manner that he quite won the hearts of the old couple, the very moment he was introduced. While he shook hands, Roy stood off, watching him with a very proud look, holding his head on one side. He was sure they would think the Perseffer was a fine boy, for every one did.

"So we have a little philanthropist here!" said old Mr. Timothy Jenks, as he held Paul's hand and drew him quite close to his chair. "I am proud to make your acquaintance indeed, and would like to hear about some of your work among the poor."

"Oh, I don't do very much," said Paul, laughing. "But when I grow up to be a man, I want to do a great deal, like Dr. Andrews does."

"I think you have already done a great deal, from what your brother tells me," said Mr. Jenks.

"Oh, yes, you have now, Persef; you know you are always hunting up somebody who is poor and sick, and Aunt Helen says so too. What was that you called him?" went on Roy, slipping up close to Mr. Jenks's chair, by the side of Paul.

"A philanthropist, do you mean?" asked Mr. Jenks.

"Yes, that's what I mean. I don't like the Perseffer to be called that kind of a name. What does it mean?"

Mr. Jenks laughed at this, and so did his wife, but before he made a reply, Paul said, "I know what it is. It is a person who is always trying to help the poor along." He remembered that Mr. Harvey, the man in

the furniture store, had also called him that, and told him what it meant.

"Well, I don't see how Phil Anther's fist could mean anything about looking after the poor," said Roy.

Old Mr. Jenks laughed at this remark until he cried, and had to wipe the tears from his eyes. His face got very red, and then he had a coughing spell that was so loud and deep that Paul and Roy both stepped off from the chair to give him plenty of room.

Mrs. Jenks laughed just as heartily, and was obliged to put down her knitting and take off her glasses to wipe her eyes. Paul and Roy could not help but join in, although it was seeing Mr. Jenks laugh that was the funniest part to them.

"Dear! dear!" he said, grunting and groaning between words, as he leaned back exhausted. "You're the greatest little chap I ever did see. No one would want to go to the Minstrels when you are around, that is a fact. Don't you think so, Susannah?" he asked, still wiping his eyes.

"I would prefer a visit from him any time to going there," replied Mrs. Jenks.

"What have you in that bag?" she asked when they had quieted down.

"Oh, that is my treasure bag," said Roy, his expression changing immediately, as he thought of the plaster he was to show as a sample for Mr. Jenks's gout, but which he feared now to bring forth, right after such a prolonged laugh at his expense.

"Why don't you show him what you have?" said Paul.

"I'm afraid, Persef."

"Afraid!" said Mr. Jenks. "Why, surely you ain't afraid of me."

"Well, you see, this is it," said Paul, speaking for him, while Roy looked his approval. "He does n't like any one to laugh at his treasure bag. He does n't mind other things, but he thinks it rude to laugh at his collection of curiosities."

"You don't think I would be so rude, do you?" asked Mr. Jenks, more anxious than ever to see the contents of the bag, and assuming an expression as serious as possible, determining not to laugh, no matter what he saw.

Encouraged by his manner, Roy stepped up close to his chair again, and, looking in the bag, pulled out a particular box.

"Why, you know I told you about a plaster that was good for rheumatism," he began, "so I brought this to show you the kind." And taking the lid off the box, he brought forth the sticky, crumpled old porous plaster and handed it to Mr. Jenks for inspection.

He took it from Roy's hand with the tip of his fingers, afraid he might hurt his feelings if he refused, and biting his lip to keep from laughing.

"If you would just buy some like that, I know it would help you, because Pat wore that one for a week right on his shoulder blade, and he said it took every bit of pain out of the blade."

Mr. Jenks bit his lip harder, and his face grew very red, his cheeks puffed away out, and Mrs. Jenks feared there would be a catastrophe any moment. The boys did not notice it, however. Mr. Jenks was very quiet, and Roy thought it was because he was so interested in what he was telling him.

"If you can't get any to-day," went on Roy, "you can have this one to-night. I think there's a good deal of medicine on it yet, — enough for one night, I guess."

It was a shame, but poor Mr. Timothy Jenks could control himself no longer, and looked as though on the verge of a stroke of apoplexy. His mouth suddenly opened, and right before Roy's eyes he burst forth in one of his deep, sonorous laughs, that shook his whole body and the chair he sat on.

Mrs. Jenks was very much provoked at this, and began to make excuses for him, for her husband was not able to do so. Roy gave one step back, with a look of greatest surprise and indignation. He never even smiled, but with his lips pressed tightly together, and a very determined air, picked up the plaster Mr. Jenks had dropped, placed it in the box, then the box in the bag, and before any one could stop him was out of the room like a shot and making for the door. He had been grossly insulted, and no calling or persuasions could get him back.

"I am sorry! I am sorry! Indeed I am," said Mr. Jenks, recovering himself, "but I couldn't help it, indeed, I couldn't, Susannah."

"Well, if I could you could; you didn't try very hard, Timothy."

"Didn't try very hard! hey! Well, that shows how much you know about it. I thought the top of my head would come off and my eyes fly out; that is how much I tried."

"Won't he come back?" he asked, as Paul appeared at the door, having run after Roy through the hall to call him.

"No, he won't come. He ran right out of the door

and down to the gate as fast as he could go, and I guess I had better go after him, because he feels very badly."

"Well, you tell him I did n't mean to insult him. I would n't have done it for anything. Now I am afraid he will always dislike me and never come here again, and I've enjoyed the little fellow so much. He's made me forget my gout many a time."

"I guess he will get over it and come back again when I tell him how much you like him," said Paul.

"Perhaps you can fix it with him better than we can," said Mr. Jenks. "And come in yourself. I would like to hear about some of those poor people you have done so much for."

"I will come in some day and tell you about the organ-grinder and his lame daughter, if you would like to hear about them."

"Indeed, we would. I know it will be very interesting," said Mrs. Jenks.

Then Paul bade them good-by and started off to find Roy and give him Mr. Jenks's apologies. He did not run as Roy did, however, for he was very tired, longing to lie down and take a nap, a desire that was very unusual for him.

CHAPTER XIX

IT was just two days before Christmas, and the streets of Chicago were all bustle and confusion. Men, women, and children rushed hither and thither, nearly all on the same errand, to buy a Christmas gift for some loved one.

Stores were draped with evergreen and holly, and their windows gay and attractive with all sorts of pretty things to catch the eye of the passer-by. Every one was loaded with bundles, and little Paul Arlington wondered, as he trudged on among them, whether any of the people he saw were buying presents for the poor. He hoped they were, for to him it seemed very selfish to be buying only for those who had enough; but however that might be, he, at least, was thinking about them, and had come to sell more books for Nell, then to buy some candy and a present for the little children in Mill Hollow who he knew were too poor to have any Christmas, and perhaps never had as much as a piece of candy or a brand-new toy.

He had no school-books in his bag this time. They were all little painted ones he had made, with poems in them. School had already closed until after Christmas, and he had persuaded his Aunt Helen to allow him to go to the city to buy some presents, she thinking he intended to purchase some little things with his savings for them all at home.

When he arrived at the corner where he usually stood, he found some people already there waiting for him, for by this time the story had spread from one to another about a beautiful boy who stood on a particular corner very frequently, selling little books of poems of his own make and composition, in support of a poor child, until hundreds knew of it and were eager to possess one of his books, and especially to see him and hear him talk.

He was in a great hurry on this particular day, and could not be drawn into any prolonged conversation, but, quickly passing his books around, said as he always did, "Won't you all please buy a book of poems, for the money is for a poor little sick girl, who has no father or mother to take care of her?" In a few moments he sold every one. Carefully placing the money in an inside pocket, and thanking each purchaser in the politest manner, he was off with his empty bag, making straight for a candy store not far off. Here he purchased about twenty-five small round boxes, with pictures on them, filled with little round drops of candy, for ten cents apiece. Then, placing them in his school-bag, he hurried to a toy store, where he purchased the same number of cheap toys, such as tops, marbles, jack jumpers, dolls, etc. Placing those in the bag with the candy, he then made straight for the railway station. He had already on another day purchased Nell's present. It was a doll, for which he paid two dollars. "All girls like dolls," he thought, "and I never saw any at Mrs. Stein's, so I guess Nell has none." He was very tired when he sat down in the train, and actually leaned his head back and closed his eyes. Every day he grew more and more weary, and that to which he had looked

forward as being a source of great pleasure was instead beginning to loom up like some gigantic task he did not seem to have the strength or desire to battle with.

It required a great effort on his part now to paint, and write the poetry in the books, and to sell them on the streets. He felt like sleeping all the time, and his brain grew dull, and he was all out of sorts with himself. Suddenly it occurred to him as the train sped along that he had better get out at Fall Brook Station and give the children the presents, for perhaps Aunt Helen would not let him go down to Mill Hollow, and it was earlier anyway than she expected him home. It did not take him long to decide, for the conductor just then opened the door, and called out Fall Brook. He was up in an instant, and made for the door, as the train slowed up.

Wearily he walked along, dragging the heavy bag on his arm, and when he arrived at Mill Hollow, began to take the gifts out one by one and hand them to the children as he passed along. Each one was given a toy and a small box of candy. Some he saw at the windows, and beckoning to them, waited until they came out and then handed them the same, saying, "Here is a little Christmas present for you, and I hope you will like it."

Some of them had no wraps on, and stood shivering in the cold, but they did not seem to mind it, so eager were they to see Nell's angel child, as he was called now by the people in Mill Hollow, for they all had heard how Nell had taken him for one of the children on the window-pane and called him angel child when she was flighty from the burning fever.

They always ran to the windows and doors to see

him when he came in the mornings; but this was the first time he had brought anything for them, except when he gave the sled to Jennie Miller.

One little girl he saw sitting on a doorstep, with a shawl over her head, looking very sad, he thought. He stepped up quite close to her and said sweetly, "I wish you a merry Christmas, and here is a little gift for you. It's a little early, but I thought I would come when I could."

The astonished child took the gift without a word, but her face expressed the pleasure she felt as she arose and followed him, with many others, up to the house where Nell lived.

Mrs. Stein met him at the door, her eyes filled with tears, and before he spoke, she said, "She vos schoost ashleep again," pointing to Nell's room, "und I dinks every time she vill not vaken any more. She vos so weak vat she can dakes no more medicine and noddings to eat. Och, my! Och, my! I hopes she soon go to dot peautiful city you tell her about, where dey're never sick mit pain."

"Do you really think she is nearly there?" asked Paul, in a whisper, holding his hand over his heart, for the news quite took his breath, notwithstanding he thought he would be ready to meet it when it finally came.

"Yah, I t'ink so, leetle friendt."

"I will not go in to see her, then, if she is asleep," he said. "I will come again to-morrow, because I want to bring her Christmas present, and here are some for your little children," he said, bringing out four toys with the boxes of candy. "I will bring yours when I bring Nell's, as I left it at home with hers."

"Oh, danks you and your people all der time. You vos so goot vat I never seen."

"And here is more money too, Mrs. Stein, to buy anything more you want," continued Paul, handing her all the money he had left.

"Vy, mine leetle friendt," said Mrs. Stein, overwhelmed with the riches that were heaped upon her, "I t'ink you vos too goot; ven I can, I go see your goot rich people to dank them for all dish."

"Oh, never mind, you need n't bother about coming up now," said Paul, imagining what his Aunt Helen would do if Mrs. Stein appeared at the house.

"Ven der child dies, den I go," said Mrs. Stein.

Wearily Paul started for home with his empty bag, and almost tumbled on the porch when he arrived at the door, from sheer exhaustion.

Aunt Helen, Roy, and Grace were out, so the weary child threw himself on the couch in the library and in a few moments had fallen asleep. Hulda came in and put an afghan over him, and noticed his flushed face. "The boy is not well," she thought; "I never saw him do this before, and he looks thin and tired. I guess Miss Helen better send for the doctor." Paul did not awaken when they all came in from their walk; and Aunt Helen was surprised and alarmed to see him sleeping, and the deep circles under his eyes, with a flush on his face that looked very much like fever. She motioned to the children to be quiet, and then sat down by the couch to watch him. It was strange, she thought, as she gazed in his face, how very thin he was getting. His cheeks had surely lost a great deal of their roundness. "I suppose he has tired himself out with his Christmas shopping and taken cold.

I will keep him in for a day or so and doctor him up."

Paul felt just as tired when he awoke from a two hours' sleep as he did when he first lay down. He made no attempt to get up, but lay quietly, as though only half awake, and ready to go off to sleep again any moment.

"I am afraid you are not well, Paul," said Aunt Helen, bending over him as he opened his eyes.

"Oh, yes, I am, Aunt Helen, only I'm tired, that is all," he said wearily.

"Poor little dear, you do not only look tired, but completely exhausted. I am afraid you have been working too hard for Christmas, and running around too much to-day in the city."

"Maybe I have," said Paul, "but I will rest now; only I want to ask you, Aunt Helen, if you won't let me take a doll down to poor little Nell for a Christmas present."

"I have no objections to the child having the doll, but I am afraid you will not be well enough to take it; however, Hulda can take it for you, if that will be any comfort to you."

"No, that would not do near as well. I would so like to give it to her myself, Aunt Helen. Nothing could hurt me in Mill Hollow, I know."

"Well, we will see when to-morrow arrives, but rest your mind on the subject, for I will see that it will get to her somehow."

"I wish Father and Mother could be here," he said, tears coming to his eyes, as the great longing came over him again to see them and have them near him once more.

"I wish they could too, Paul dear. It will be a strange Christmas indeed this year, but we will try to be as happy as possible, and not wish them back for a while, when we know how much your father is improving, and from all reports will return to us in the spring entirely restored to health."

"Yes, it makes me happy when I think of that, and I must not wish them to come home, for he might get sick again;" and tired little Paul sighed and closed his eyes once more.

"I do not think it necessary to send for the doctor," Aunt Helen remarked to Hulda. "He is only very tired, and has taken a little cold. I think he will be all right in a day or so." He was given a warm bath and arranged comfortably for the night. "In the morning you will be as well as ever, I am sure. All you want is a good sleep," said Aunt Helen, kissing him good-night.

The next morning he appeared to be no worse, but no better, and Aunt Helen would not, of course, give her consent to his going to Mill Hollow with the doll. Even if he had been well she would not have done so, as it began to snow early in the morning and continued all day.

"If you are so bent upon it, Paul," she said, seeing his great disappointment, "I will find some one to take it down for you to-day."

"If I thought I should be well enough by to-morrow, I would rather take it myself on Christmas Day," said Paul.

"Very well, leave it until then; and if it is clear and you are well enough, Hulda can go with you."

He made no audible objections to Hulda's company, and did not mention the subject during the day. He

still felt very languid and cared not to interest himself in all the Christmas talk that was the principal topic of conversation in the house. Occasionally he fell asleep on the couch, but instead of being refreshed after he awoke, he felt only more drowsy, and had very little to say. He tried to read several times, but that was impossible. He could not get interested; besides, it made his head feel worse. "Father said before he went away he felt so tired all the time, and I guess the kind he felt I must be feeling now," he thought.

It did not cease snowing until the sun went down; then it cleared away beautifully; the stars came out bright and clear, and the full moon shone with an unusual brilliancy. Paul was delighted to see it just before going to bed, and hoped he would feel well enough to go to Nell's the next day, as the prospects were that it would be clear. It being Christmas Eve, Roy and Grace were in a state of ecstasy in anticipation of what the coming day might have in store for them. Paul seemed not to be interested at all in anything they said, or that was going on in the house. Some mysterious boxes and bundles had arrived and were taken quickly to the Christmas room, where the tree was to be, and all the gifts displayed. But the door was quickly locked, and no one had a chance even to peep, but Paul was not at all curious and did not seem to care what the boxes and bundles contained.

"Paul is not himself at all," said Aunt Helen to Hulda during the day. "I do not think he is much better; he seems so listless and indifferent to everything, which is very unusual for him. If he does not improve more by to-morrow, I will send for Dr. Barlow. Poor little fellow, I suppose he thinks his Aunt Helen a perfect

old ogre; and perhaps I have been a little bit too severe with him, Hulda, but it really was all for his own good that I tried to rid him of all these foolish notions about the poor. He is so bent on taking a doll he has purchased to that poor little beggar he found at the church that I could not refuse him, and told him if he were well enough you could go with him to-morrow, and he could take it to her. But I am afraid he will not improve sufficiently in one day to risk taking such a long walk."

"Well, if he don't, I'll take it for him. We won't let him have that disappointment on Christmas Day, anyway," said Hulda.

It was not long before Roy and Grace were soundly sleeping, their hearts light and happy, with no melancholy thoughts to drive away their slumber. But the little poet and friend of the poor, who needed sleep much more than they, was lying wide awake. "If this pain would leave my head," he thought, "and this tired feeling go away, I should be all right. But I must try to go to sleep if I want to be well enough to-morrow to walk to Mill Hollow." And so thinking, he closed his eyes, but could not sleep. He could see Nell before him all the time, lying on her bed in the corner of her room, and imagined all sorts of things concerning her. "Perhaps she will die before I get there," or "she may be calling for me, and how dreadful to think of her being disappointed." Finally, he fell into a troubled sleep, and dreamed that Nell was calling him and watching the door with that wild staring look he had often seen. "Oh, come to me! Come to me, angel child, before I die," she called, her arms outstretched in eager expectancy. He awoke with a start and sat upright in bed, peering through the darkness of the room. For a

moment it all seemed real, and that Nell was actually looking at him from one of the dark corners, though she had ceased calling. Then she disappeared, and at the same time he realized that he had been dreaming, and lay back on the pillow again, trying to still the wild beatings of his heart. Although he felt satisfied that it was all but a dream, yet he began to think that it was sent to him perhaps, as a message, and how dreadfully he would feel if he went the next day and was told she was dead and had been calling for him. The more he thought of it, the more he felt convinced of it, and finally he determined he would get up and go to Mill Hollow. "I will take Nero with me and I won't be afraid," he thought. "No one will see me; I will be back before they are up and will take the key."

He knew it must be far in the night, for the sleigh-bells had ceased their jingling, and not a sound was heard in the house. His mind once made up, he immediately acted, without a moment's hesitation. Cautiously he stepped out on the floor and groped about in the dark for his clothes. Somehow he felt stronger than he did the day before, only the pain in his head was just the same. He was soon dressed, then he went to the closet for Nell's doll, and, holding it carefully in his arms, he stepped to the door on his toes, and cautiously turned the knob. Nero had been lying on a mat outside the door, as was his nightly custom, and his quick ear had caught the sound of some one moving in the room within; and as Paul opened the door, he gave a bark. He was silenced by a few whispered words, and, knowing well what his young master required of him, did not attempt to bark again. Paul stood quite still for a moment and listened, but all was

still, not a sound was heard. Nero frequently gave a bark at night if he heard the slightest noise, so it never alarmed any one when they heard it. With his hand on the dog's collar, and the doll clasped in his arm, he walked across the hall to the stairway. He passed the Christmas room, the door being now wide open, and all in readiness for them to enter in the morning to see what Santa Claus had brought, as was their custom every year. There stood the tree, with its bright balls and glittering tinsel, and the room was filled with gifts of all kinds. But it held no attraction whatever for Paul Arlington. He simply glanced in as he passed by, knowing it contained many surprises for him, but he had no desire to discover what they were. "To-morrow will be time enough," he thought. "After I see Nell and give her the doll, then I'll have plenty of time to think about my Christmas." Every time his footstep made a little creak on the stairs he stopped for a moment, almost breathless, to listen if any one had been disturbed. The moon shone bright upon him and Nero through a window on the top landing of the stairs, as slowly they made their way down.

Safely he reached the lower hall, but was disappointed to find that his coat and hat were not on the rack where he expected to find them. There was nothing on it at all except a large, soft felt hat of his father's. "Well! why won't that do?" he thought, taking it down. "It will cover my whole head and make me warmer." But what would he do for a coat? He could not run the risk of going upstairs again; some one would surely hear him. Suddenly he thought of an old black ulster of Hulda's that usually hung in a closet in the kitchen. "I will put that on; no one will see me; better than nothing," was



the conclusion that he came to, and, in a few moments, he had it on and buttoned up. The sleeves came down below his hands, and it trailed on the floor as he walked along. He thoughtfully took the key out of the door, then quietly closed it after him. Outside on the step stood his rubber boots. He was glad that he saw them, for the snow was deep, and he knew by the time that he reached Mill Hollow that his feet and legs would be wet. He soon had them on and stepped off the porch, with Nero at his side; the dog seemed to understand just what was going on, and to know that it was a very important and solemn occasion, and that he must be very quiet and dignified. He walked along solemnly, rubbing his great head occasionally against Paul, as though assuring him of his confidence and sympathy. When they reached the gate, Paul halted for a moment, filled with awe. He gazed up at the full moon, sailing along so quietly through the clear winter sky, as though asking its guidance before starting on so perilous a journey.

His head continued to throb as he trudged through the snow. How hot it felt, and how refreshing the crisp night air as it fanned his cheeks! Once a strange feeling of fear seized him, and he stopped and pressed his hand to his heart, for it seemed to beat so fast that he fancied that he could hear it, and the pain in his head and eyes grew more intense.

He wondered if the pain in Nell's head was anything like this pain; if so, he did not think it strange that she could not walk the day he found her, or that she talked so strangely. "Hers must have been worse, however, for I can walk, only I am awful tired, but I will rest for a whole week when I come back."

On, on he went, past the church and Dr. Barlow's. He saw no lights in any of the houses, and the town was wrapped in slumber. One! two! a bell tolled out through the stillness, and startled him; he stood and trembled for fully a moment.

When he reached the top of the hill and looked down eagerly at Mill Hollow, he was sure that he saw the flicker of a lamp through a window, and thought that it was in Mrs. Stein's house. What did it mean? Only this, that Nell must be dying, for a light to be burning at such an hour.

He was about to hurry down the hill, when the sound of footsteps crunching upon the snow behind him attracted his attention, and, turning quickly, he saw a man approaching. Nero began to bark, and Paul clutched his collar and silenced him, while he turned and stood waiting the man's approach.

Notwithstanding Nero's protection, his heart beat violently, and he stood as if paralyzed.

"Who are you, and what are you?" asked the man, as he came nearer and beheld the strange little figure, with a large felt hat covering his entire head, and a long black coat trailing in the snow, clasping to his heart a doll, and his hand clutching the collar of a large dog.

"I am Paul Arlington," he replied in a trembling voice, recovering somewhat from his fright when he saw the man looked kindly enough, and appeared rather to be afraid of him.

"Paul Arlington!" he repeated; "I never heard of you. Do you live in Avondale?" and he stooped and peered in the face under the hat while he spoke.

"Yes, I live there," replied Paul.

"Why, then, in the name of goodness are you walking the snowy roads at this time of night?"

"Because," replied Paul, "a child is dying down there," pointing to Mill Hollow. "See the light," he continued, gaining more courage; "I think it is in Nell's room, and so she must be dying, and I—"

"Nell's room!" interrupted the man, very much excited. "Nell who?"

"Why, Nell Myers, sir. Do you know her?"

"Do I know her? Do I know her?" wailed the man. "Why, it is my little Nell, — my own little child. I have come back to take care of her. Tell me it is a joke, child, gnome, or spirit, whatever you may be," he continued, taking hold of Paul's arm, but not roughly, his voice filled with anguish.

"No, it's no joke; it is all true, for I have been to see her, and she has told me all about you," said Paul, knowing now that it was Nell's father, and not feeling at all afraid of him, but thinking only how glad Nell would be to see him before she died.

"Tell me! tell me! child, are you wide awake, or walking in your sleep and dreaming," said Fred Myers, peering into Paul's face again, yet still holding him by the arm.

"No, I am not asleep. I am very wide awake; but come quick if you want to see Nell before she dies. She has something to tell you. She has been watching and waiting for you a long time; but you never came, and she told me that if I ever saw you to give you her message, and I have it written on paper, but perhaps now she can tell you herself. She will be so glad to see you," said Paul, as they started down the hill.

Fred Myers wrung his hands and moaned repeatedly, as they trudged along through the snow. Weary little Paul's legs grew heavier every moment, and his breath came in quick, short gasps, as he tried to keep up with the long strides of his companion.

"What am I thinking of?" said Fred Myers, suddenly turning, and looking at the little exhausted figure panting by his side. "You must not come with me, child; go home as quickly as you can. Your parents surely don't know of this?"

"My parents are in France," said Paul, "and I cannot go back now, for I had a dream and heard Nell calling me, and I must see her before she dies."

There was something very weird and unnatural about this strange little figure to Fred Myers. The boy's spirituelle face and sweet voice made him still doubt whether he was actually flesh and blood.

"Will you go back as soon as you see her?" he asked, "if I let you come?"

"Yes, I will go right away, indeed, I will, sir," said Paul, on the verge of tears, fearing at the last moment that he might be forced to turn back.

"Well, come along, then, quick. I will carry you a little way, for you are out of breath," said Fred Myers, picking him up in his arms, to which Paul made no objections.

"Why do you carry this doll, child?"

"It is Nell's Christmas present. All little girls like dolls, you know, and I thought it would make her happy to play with it, but of course she won't need it if she is dying."

"Oh, my poor, poor baby! My poor little girl, to have no one to think of her on that day, and I have been

so cruel to leave her. But it was that awful liquor, child, that did the harm," he said with moans and sobs.

"Yes, she told me all about it, and that you would be a good man if it was n't for that," said Paul.

"If I can only hear her say she forgives me," wailed the wretched man.

"She has forgiven you," said Paul; "and if you are too late I will give you the paper that tells all about it, for I wrote it down when she told me, so I would n't forget."

The tears were streaming down Fred Myers' cheeks, as he hurried along with his burden. Nearer and nearer they came to the light. All was wrapped in a midnight stillness when they reached the little settlement. There was no sign of life, except an occasional glimpse of a figure passing the window from where the lamp shone. And, sure enough, it was in Nell's room, as Paul had thought. Somehow his heart went out in deep sympathy for Nell's father, when he saw the tears streaming down his face, and realized his great anguish on hearing the sad news about his only child.

Fred Myers began to think it must be all true; but how could the child know so much about his Nell? At first it had seemed so unreal and unnatural to meet a child at midnight who should tell him the sad fate of the little one that he was in search of. He must see his little Nell, his poor, little, starving child! Ah! the remorse that he had felt while lying for weeks on a sick bed in a hospital no words could describe. He wept bitter tears while lying helpless on his back, and vowed that if he ever recovered he would devote the remainder of his life to his child, and try to make up

in every way possible for his cruel neglect in the past. So the very day that he left the hospital in New York he started for Mill Hollow. The physician who had worked so hard to save his life, gave him money to enable him to reach his destination, having heard from his own lips of his new resolutions and his anxiety to get back to his child. He knew that he was sincere, and so gave him all the encouragement and help possible. He arrived in Chicago at midnight, and in his eagerness to get to Mill Hollow, he started immediately to walk there, as he had just missed the last train on that branch.

CHAPTER XX

WHEN the two midnight travellers reached the house, they were both too much occupied with anxious thoughts to speak.

Fred Myers gave a loud knock at the door, which was opened almost immediately by a man in his shirt sleeves, who held a small lamp. Every one in this house was awake and up, for they all knew that Nell Myers was dying upstairs, and since early in the evening had kept going back and forth from Mrs. Stein's room, inquiring if she had gone.

"You have forgotten me, I see, Jake McNally, but I don't wonder at that," said Fred Myers, as the man peered into the faces of the two figures at the door.

"Is it you, Fred Myers?" he said, stepping back in astonishment.

"Yes, it is Fred Myers, and I have come back to take care of my child. Tell me, Jake, that she is not dying, as this child tells me," he continued, pointing to Paul as they stepped in the hall.

Jake McNally grasped his arm, and in his rough way tried to prepare him for the worst, while Paul walked past them and up the stairs, with Nero at his heels.

"How is it that child is with you at this hour?" said Jake McNally, looking after the little figure.

"I met him on the way. I thought he was walking

in his sleep. He actually frightened me, and I could n't get him to go home."

"Mighty strange for him to be out at this time of night, but he has taken care of your child for weeks, Fred Myers, and has brought money to Mrs. Stein to buy all she needed, and sent the doctor here; but she was too far gone."

"Then it is all true, all true," wailed poor Fred Myers; "I see it in your face that you have no good news."

"Don't be in a hurry now, just wait. She's not yet dead, but be quiet and calm yourself before you see her," said Jake McNally.

Paul met several persons coming from the sick room, as he slowly climbed the stairs. He was very eager to get there, but he felt so weak that his legs almost refused to carry him. They raised their hands in astonishment when they saw him, with a large hat in one hand and a doll in the other, and the long ulster trailing on the steps behind him.

"Has she gone yet?" he asked almost breathlessly.

"No, not yet," they said; "she has been calling for you, and looking all around for you every time she opened her eyes."

"Yes, I know," said Paul, thinking of his dream, and that he was right, after all; he was so glad now that he had come.

When he stepped into the room, one nervous and superstitious woman gave a shriek. She was sure now that the child whom Nell Myers called the angel child must be indeed a spirit, to appear so suddenly at such an hour of the night. The room was full of curious women, who, filled with a morbid curiosity, had settled

themselves in Mrs. Stein's room to await the passing away of little Nell. They looked amazed indeed, when they saw Paul, with the queer-looking coat trailing on the floor, and the doll in his arms, and a big dog stepping out in a majestic manner by his side.

Mrs. Stein, hearing the shriek, stepped out quickly from the inner room while Paul was taking off the coat and placing it with the hat in a corner of the room. She, too, almost gave way to a loud exclamation when she saw him. He appeared not to notice it, however, and quietly stepping up to her said, in a low voice, "I heard Nell calling me in a dream, Mrs. Stein, and so I thought I had better come to see her, and I brought her Christmas present with me. May I go in now? I brought her father too, and he is downstairs."

"Vat you say, Fred Myers gome home mit you?"

"Yes, he did, Mrs. Stein, and I guess he is coming up the stairs now."

The astonished neighbors, when they heard this, made for the door and stairway, Mrs. Stein following close behind them, all eager to see for themselves if it were actually as the child had said, while Paul walked alone into Nell's room, still clasping the precious doll. On tiptoe he advanced to the bed. Two women sat by the bedside watching; they arose when Paul entered, to make way for him. They knew who he was and all about his visits, and what he had done for Nell. They had caught a glimpse of him through the open door, and knew what had caused the shriek. They too had been just as surprised, but had restrained themselves, as they were the solemn watchers by the death-bed. Not a word was spoken. Paul placed the doll down at the foot of the bed, then leaned over and touched one of

Nell's hands and watched the white face, which to him seemed lifeless; there was a slight twitching of the muscles in her face, showing that she still lived.

Suddenly she opened her eyes and looked straight into those of Paul's. Her gaze startled him, and he trembled with those strange sensations that he had felt so often of late. Yet he leaned over the bed, and Nell's eyes opened more widely, and her lips moved, but there was no sound. "I had better say something," he thought, and bending his head still lower, he whispered, "I have come, Nell. I came to be with you."

Her lips moved again, and to Paul it seemed that she was trying to say, Sing, and immediately he began the hymn she loved, in a low sweet voice, —

"Angels ever bright and fair,
Take, oh, take me to thy care."

No one realized while he sang, what a struggle he was undergoing. He summoned together all the courage that he could muster for this last moment, and fighting heroically his own physical suffering, together with the mental anguish that this scene caused him, he sang all the verses of this beautiful hymn.

The weary eyelids of the dying child drooped, and in a few moments the little sufferer's body was at rest, her spirit taking its flight upwards. Higher and higher it ascended, while the earth faded away, and the light of the Beautiful City was before her, and it seemed as though she heard her angel child singing with those within.

Even the two women were not aware of her flight, so noiselessly had she passed away, without a sigh or movement. The excitement of the moment kept Paul

up and enabled him to finish the song. The two women wiped their eyes while he sang, as did those who now filled the doorway, attracted by his voice. Meanwhile Mrs. Stein, with some others, was trying to restrain Fred Myers from rushing excitedly into the room.

"You dare not keep me any longer," he said, making desperate efforts to free himself from those who held him.

"I'll let you go, if you'll only try to be quiet," said Jake McNally, finally loosening his hold. With a few bounds he was at the top of the stairs, and, hearing a sweet voice singing, he stopped suddenly and listened. He stood like one paralyzed, then made a rush for the door, while the curious neighbors made way for him.

Paul had just finished singing, and the two watchers were leaning over the bed. "She has gone," said one, just as Fred Myers entered, and threw himself across the bed. They tried to comfort him and to draw him away from the still little figure, but he paid no attention to them whatever. "Oh, my poor little Nell! My poor little babe," he wailed, "won't you tell me that you have forgiven me before you die? I have come to take care of you now always."

For a short time he was the centre of attraction; his grief was dreadful to witness, and the room was now full of people watching him. At this moment Paul slipped out, still closely followed by Nero, put on his coat and hurried down the stairs and out of the door. There was no use in his staying any longer. He felt that his work was done, and now he only thought of getting home as quickly as possible, that he might lie down and sleep. He heard a very queer sound in his ears,

like rushing waters, and his head was throbbing more than ever. His mouth felt dry and parched, and occasionally he stooped and picked up some snow to cool it, pressing it to his lips, and filling his mouth with it. He did not seem to feel the cold, and the snow looked very inviting, like a soft, downy bed. He wondered if it would rest him if he could lie down on it for a few moments, for he was very sleepy. But no! no! he forgot; he must get home before morning; for how dreadful if they all arose before he returned and found that he was not there. So with these thoughts he made extra exertions and strained every tired little nerve to its utmost. Only to get home! Never before had he been so anxious to reach there, but once there he would lie down all the time, even if it were Christmas Day. He would not care for the tree and presents; but after he was rested, then he would look at them, so ran his thoughts.

Again he stood at the top of the hill, his legs feeling so heavy that he could scarcely raise them, or keep his tired body from tumbling in the snow. The rubber boots felt like leaden weights that were dragging him down. He stood where he had met Nell's father, and gazed about him as though again expecting to meet another midnight traveller. Suddenly he began to tremble again, his legs tottered, and he was about to fall, when a gleam of light attracted him. It was not very far off, and he wondered if he could reach it, and find some one there to take him home, for now he began to realize that he would never reach there by himself.

Again he started forward, keeping his eye steadily on the light. Then for a few seconds everything was inky

black, and the light disappeared. His swaying body fell to the ground, and Nero, knowing that all was not right with his young master, barked loudly, as he stood over him. Then he was conscious of that rushing in his ears again, and that he had fallen. He did not realize, however, that he had actually become unconscious, only that he felt very weak. Clinging to Nero, he managed to rise again, and looked eagerly for the light. "Yes, there it is again, and I do believe it is in Dr. Barlow's window," he thought. "If I could only get to him, he would help me." All sorts of strange fancies filled his brain, yet above them all arose that one desire, to get to the light. He never would have reached it, had it not been for Nero's assistance, for he had thrown himself across his back, and placed his arms around his neck, while he carried him.

"In here, dear old Nero," he said, when they reached Dr. Barlow's gate, and immediately he turned in while Paul guided him, until they stood under the light that shone from a second-story window. Paul tried to call, but so faint was his voice that it was impossible for any one to hear him. Nero, seeming to realize the situation, barked again and again, while Paul lay in the snow and moaned.

The doctor had just returned from a midnight call, and was about to retire for the second time when he heard the barking. He knew that it was not either of his dogs, and as it was close to his house, he thought that he would raise the window and look out. Taking up a lamp from a table, he held it out as far as he could, and Nero barked louder than ever when he saw him. Dr. Barlow recognized the dog, for there was not another like it in Avondale, and he also saw a black heap

close beside him. "It must be some one from Arlington's," thought the doctor, "who has come for me, and is perhaps overcome with the cold." He called his wife, and they hastily dressed and started for the door, while Nero continued to bark incessantly. When they reached the little heap and threw the light of the lamp upon it, they were horror-stricken to see lying before them little Paul Arlington, unconscious of all his surroundings. It did not take long to get him into the house and lay him on the couch in the doctor's office, where all was done that was possible to bring him to consciousness again.

The doctor finally came to the conclusion that he had been delirious and had walked out unconsciously, and of course they could not know anything of his absence at home.

Old Ned, his colored coachman, was called up and sent to the little house in the oaks to take them the dreadful news, just at the dawn of the Christmas Day.

"I am not surprised that the child is ill," said Dr. Barlow to his wife. "He has been under a great nervous strain about that poor little child in Mill Hollow, and I often wondered that his Aunt Helen allowed him to go there so frequently. She was certainly very kind to her and very generous, sending money with Paul every week, as I told you.

"He will not be able to be moved my dear," he continued; "I shall insist upon his staying here. He is entirely too ill to be moved; and if you will get the room ready adjoining ours, I will carry him upstairs, for a bed would be much more comfortable for him."

It did not take long for Mrs. Barlow to have everything in readiness in a pleasant sunny room.

"Don't forget to tell them that he is safe, and all is being done for him that is in my power," said the doctor to Ned as he left on his sad errand. He shook his woolly head and muttered to himself as he made rapid strides to Paul's home. He was sorry to be the one called upon to startle the family with the news that one of their little ones had wandered away in the night unknown to them, and was perhaps now at the point of death for all that old Ned knew.

"I'se awful shaky 'bout dis bisness, suah enuf," he said to himself, when he arrived at the gate. "De Lawd knows dis here family is gwine ter be drefull 'sprised, an' old Ned has ter tell 'em 'bout de bressed boy wid yaller curls and blue eyes, who lay so misabel dis berry minute de Lawd only knows ef any bref is lef in his body.

"Dar now, I'se gwine ter do it, fo' ole Ned must 'bey orders."

He rang the bell, then listened eagerly for coming footsteps, but he heard no sign of life; then he rang again, and knocked and shook the door. Then a window was raised, and Aunt Helen called out to the figure who stepped off the porch that he might be seen, "What is the matter?"

"I'se sorry toe bring yer de mo'ful news dish Christmas marnin' from Marse Barlow, miss, but de bressed chile wid de yaller curls was foun' by de do' in de snow," he said.

Aunt Helen felt as though her heart had stopped beating while she listened to Dr. Barlow's coachman, whom she readily recognized by his voice and the outline of his figure in the gray dawn. But she laughed at herself for her foolish fears. The man has made

a mistake, that is certain; it must be some other child.

"You must be mistaken," she called. "It cannot be any of our children, for I saw them myself safely in bed."

"Marse Barlow say dat de chile come out in de night caze of de fever dat burned in his head. It's de bressed boy dat lives in dis yere house, miss. I'se know de lil feller. I'se sholy am sorry toe bring you de news 'bout him."

While he still talked, Aunt Helen had left the window, and, hastily making a light, looked toward the bed, and, sure enough, it was empty. For a moment she became frantic and lost control of herself completely. She stood wringing her hands in the hall and calling for Hulda with all the strength she could gather. Then like a flash she slipped on a gown and ran down the stairs to open the door, crying hysterically.

The old negro was greatly affected when he saw her grief, and made an effort to make things as light as possible as he stepped in the hall.

"Dar now, jes calm yo'self, miss, de chile am not so bad. He's gwine to git 'bout again, I'se suah."

"He must have had a raging fever to get up and go out in the night," sobbed Aunt Helen, "and to think that I never heard him. I did not realize he was so ill; in fact, I thought he had only over-exerted himself and taken a little cold. I will never forgive myself, never! If you will wait a moment, I will go back with you," she said.

By this time Hulda had slipped on some clothes and joined them in the hall, where the whole story was repeated again by Ned, while Aunt Helen hastily prepared to take her departure.

Two little figures in their night dresses were leaning over the banisters, wondering what all the confusion was about; and when Aunt Helen clasped them both in her arms at the head of the stairs with tears in her eyes, and told them that their brother had left the house in the night and was found lying in the snow by Dr. Barlow's house, they were indeed shocked, and for a time forgot that it was Christmas morning, and that the tree and gifts were waiting for them.

"And was he unconscious, did you say?" asked Aunt Helen, as she and Ned hurried along the road.

"I'se suah he was fo' a time, miss, but Marse Barlow fix him all right, depen' on dat; but de Lawd is heah fo' to stretch out His han' dis berry minute; tek hol, an' de angel ob peace will come ter yo' heart ter help suppo't yo'," said old Ned, in a quavering voice.

Mrs. Barlow, who was watching at the window, ran to the door to greet her.

"This seems like some dreadful nightmare to me, Mrs. Barlow," said Aunt Helen, while the tears started afresh. "I cannot realize that it is so. I knew nothing whatever of his going out, and left him safely sleeping in his bed when I retired. Oh, what will his parents think of me when they hear of it! I should have sent for the doctor two days ago, but I know so little about sickness, and had not the least idea that there was anything serious the matter with him."

"Calm yourself, Miss Wesley, for it will never do for you to give way in this manner," said Mrs. Barlow, placing her arm around her trembling form, and leading her into the library, where a bright fire burned in the grate; then placing her in a comfortable chair, told her she must be more composed before she went up to see

Paul, as the least excitement might cause him to pass into a faint, and the doctor had just succeeded in restoring his consciousness. She insisted on her taking a hot drink, then tried in every possible way to console and comfort her, waiting until she was able to control herself sufficiently to enter the sick room.

"You are all very kind," said Aunt Helen, "and I am thankful at least that he happened to fall into such good hands; but when does the doctor think he can be taken home?"

"Why, not at present, Miss Wesley; it would not be safe to risk it," she said, "and we should be only too glad to have him stay just where he is. If you are willing, I will help you nurse him. The doctor has taken a great fancy to the little fellow, and I know will give him the most watchful care."

"But what a trouble it will be giving you!" said Aunt Helen, ready almost to fall at her feet in gratitude for her encouraging words and kind offer.

"I assure you that it will be no trouble to us whatever; on the other hand, it will be a great pleasure to help you all that I can. I realize your position thoroughly, with the child's parents away and the responsibility all on your shoulders; but do not look upon the dark side, and if there is anything in nursing, we will have him well again before very long, I am sure."

With swollen eyes but steadier nerves, Aunt Helen, accompanied by Mrs. Barlow, entered the sick room.

The doctor rose from the bedside and shook her hand as she approached, speaking a few encouraging words in a low tone. Paul was lying quite still, only now and then opening his eyes and looking about in a puzzled manner. Aunt Helen was shocked when she

saw the sad change wrought in the face of her little nephew, and wondered how she could have been so blind as not to see that he had been very ill for some time.

In a few moments the doctor and she went into an adjoining room, and he repeated what his wife had already told her, that it would never do to run the risk of moving him. He was not positive of the nature of his illness, but there were indications of typhoid. He assured her that everything would be done that was possible for him. "I think the little fellow has been under a great strain about that beggar child down in Mill Hollow," he said.

"Yes, I think that he has thought a great deal about her. He had a doll purchased for her for a Christmas gift, and has been trying to persuade me to let him take it to her; but I told him that I did not think he would be well enough; besides, I do not like the idea of his going down among those hovels."

"You surely were aware that he has been making almost daily visits there, and taking money for this child, were you not?" asked the doctor.

"What! Our little Paul taking money to Mill Hollow, and making daily visits there, did you say?" exclaimed Aunt Helen, in surprise.

"Yes, I am quite sure he has," replied the doctor, "and I often wondered that you did not object to it, and send the money by some one else."

"I have never sent one penny to the child," continued Aunt Helen, in great excitement. "Are you sure you are not mistaken, Doctor? Where could he have gotten any money?"

"That, then, is a mystery, if it did not come from you,

as I had always imagined," said the doctor. "He came to see me about the child, and told me her whole history; and also that he went to see her nearly every day. Mrs. Stein also told me of his visits, and the money he brought regularly, and how kind his people were to send it."

Aunt Helen buried her face in her hands and wept. It all dawned upon her now, and she was not surprised at his illness, if this was the strain that he had been under all those weeks.

What affected her the most was the thought that she alone was to blame for it all; for if she had interested herself a little in the beggar girl, it would have pleased him, and he would have confided in her, and this dreadful affair would never have happened.

"I never imagined that he was in Mill Hollow more than two or three times," sobbed Aunt Helen. "Knowing that I did not sympathize with him in his notions about the poor, I suppose he refrained from telling me all that he was doing. But the money, — I cannot account for that. I never gave him a cent, as I said, to take to Mrs. Stein; and I cannot imagine how he obtained it, unless he asked people for it."

"There is still a great mystery about it all," said Dr. Barlow, "and I shall try to unravel it. Of one thing at least, I am sure, that the strain he has been under in watching this dying child from day to day and looking after her wants is the cause of this illness.

"The child died in the night," continued the doctor. "I received word early this morning."

Soon Aunt Helen was on her way home to make preparations to leave it indefinitely to take care of Paul.

"You will have to get along the best you can with

the two children," she said to Hulda. "There is no alternative but for me to be with Paul, as they advise me not to move him.

"I will run over whenever I can. Watch the children closely that they do not take cold. In the mean time I will inquire at the doctor's for some one to come in and help you; so that you can devote most of your time to them.

"If Paul only recovers, that is all I desire now on earth," she continued, as she stood in the hall, ready to leave for the doctor's house again.

"I don't like iss Trismas Day one sin'le bit," said Grace, her eyes filled with tears.

"Poor little dear, it is a very sad Christmas for us all," said Aunt Helen, kissing her good-by; "but try to be good and amuse yourselves with all the pretty toys you have upstairs, and may be Brother Paul will come back well and strong in a few weeks."

"Tell the Perseffer I am awful sorry he's sick, and that I'll save all his Christmas presents for him, and won't let anybody touch them," called Roy from the door, as Aunt Helen stepped from the porch with a sad face and aching heart.

"I will tell him, Roy, when he is able to talk," she called back.

CHAPTER XXI

ROY and Grace both felt very lonely and sad on Christmas Day. It was dreadful to think of Brother Paul in another house very ill, and Aunt Helen gone to take care of him. Their father and mother were so far away, too. True, there was the Christmas room, and the various gifts they had sent from France, and the long, loving Christmas letters that had come with them, but it was not the same as when they were present.

Occasionally they did forget for a short time all their sadness, as they became interested in the attractions of the Christmas room, and played with their new toys and games, and examined the pretty bright things that hung on the tree; then again their faces would grow quite serious, and they would sit side by side under the tree on two small wicker chairs, that were also gifts, and talk about Paul having been found in the snow by the doctor's house in the night, and wonder what made him go out at such a time, even if he were ill.

In the evening, after they had eaten their supper, Hulda lit the gas in the Christmas room and told them to be good and amuse themselves until she washed the dishes; then she would come up and put them to bed.

It seemed lonelier and more solemn than ever in the house now that night had come, and no one with them

but Hulda; and she looked so sorrowful and was wiping her eyes nearly all the time, they could not find much comfort in talking to her.

They sat down under the tree again, as they had done so often during the day when they felt too sad to play. Grace was looking away off into space, rocking slowly back and forth in her Christmas gift, busily thinking. Then tears came to her eyes, and she said, "I 'm awsul sorry Bruver Paul is sick, and I tan't see him, and Farver and Murver are ever so far away, too."

Roy felt very queer when he saw the tears, and he came very near crying himself. Nothing had ever happened in his life before that made him so quiet and serious as all the sad circumstances connected with this Christmas Day. He swallowed a lump once or twice that filled his throat, then in his light-hearted way said, "Oh, well, never mind; he 'll get well soon. Lots and lots of people in the world get awful sick and they get well again."

"'Es, but 'ots and 'ots of peoples dies, too," said Grace, mournfully, the tears dropping one by one off her cheek.

Roy drew his chair up closer, and felt he must do or say something to make things look brighter for Grace; for if there was anything that he disliked, it was to see any one cry. "I know lots of people die, too, Grace," he said, after a pause; "but then, you know, they don't die with the kind of sickness Paul has."

"Oh, don't 'ey?" said Grace, her face brightening up immediately at those encouraging words. "Is it only er 'ittle sitness 'ike er chitten-pox I had one day?"

"No, not like that erzackly," replied Roy, speaking very slowly, so as to be sure of saying the right thing and make baby Grace's tears disappear altogether. "It's a sickness, you know, that little boys get who write poetries, and hunt beggars and organ-grinders all the time. I had it just a twenty bit once when I made poetry verses, and it was an awful pain right in my head; and when you make lots of them, besides worry about all the poor people in the world, why, it makes your brain all wibbly wobbly; and Hulda said that is the matter with the Perseffer, — his brains are all wobbling in his head."

"An' don't anybodies die when 'ey have a sitness wiv er brains wobblin'?"

"No," drawled Roy, as though the very idea of such a thing was ridiculous and unheard of.

"Baby Martin did n't die wiv her brains wobblin', did she?"

"No," again drawled Roy. "She was too little to have that kind of sickness, because she didn't know even what a beggar was. She died with Amonia, Mother said. It's a dreadful disease, Amonia is. Your lungs, what you breathe with, you know, get all squashed up to pieces more and more every minute, until, scoop! comes your last breath, and your lungs go to smithers, and you're dead. Then there's nervous posteration; that is a dreadful sickness, too; your nerves all posterate, you know, and it makes you cross and grumpy and laugh at peoples' klektion of curosties."

"Do 'ey?" said Grace, growing more and more interested in Roy's great knowledge of all the ills the human flesh is heir to, and greatly relieved to know

that Paul's sickness was one that would not end in death.

"Yes, they do," continued Roy. "And then there's small-pox; that is the most awfulest sickness of all. Your whole body, from the top of your head to your toes, is covered with poxes and —"

"What are poxes 'ike?" interrupted Grace.

"Oh! they are like awful sores that make big holes in you. I saw a man once who had it, but he was well, only the little holes were still on his face, and they will never go away."

Grace shuddered at the description of this dreadful sickness.

"Then there's measels, what we had, and mumps, and stomach-aches, backaches, and all sorts of 'tagious things. Then there's a whole lot of little sicknesses, — like cuts, burns, bruises, corns, and colds, you know."

"My dacious!" said Grace, with a long-drawn sigh, "er must be an awsul lot of fings to make peoples sick, must n't 'ey?"

"Yes, lots," replied Roy.

"Now which one do you call Bruver Paul's sitness?"

"Oh, I guess you would call his 'fever of the brain,' because Hulda said it all happened because he worried it too much. The Perseffer said our brains are like little worms, all lying together in the top of our heads, under our hair."

Grace raised her hand quickly to the top of her head, as though she expected to feel them. That made Roy laugh, then Grace laughed, too, quite heartily, and Roy said, "Not outside your head. You can't feel them; they are inside, under the skin. And just think," he went on, "they make us think and move,

and tell us where to go when we want to go anywhere, and when to come back when we want to get home. The Perseffer said the brain is the most wonderful part of our whole selfs, so you see he tired his out worrying too much."

"I dess he dot it tired wiv 'ose dreat big thoughts, did n't he?"

"Yes, that was it; and all he has to do now is to get it rested again, then he will be well and come home."

"An' 'en we will have our Trismas over adain, won't we?"

"Yes, we 'll have jolly times when the Perseffer gets back, and we won't let him make up any more poetries, will we?"

"No, we won't; or doe to see any orden-drinders, or 'ittle beggar chillens."

"No, we won't; we 'll just watch him all the time."

"But when he drows up to be a dreat big man, den he tan, tan't he? 'tause when I get a big lady, I 'm dawn wiv him to find all er poor 'ittle dirls and boys who has n't anyfing to eat. When we drow big den our brains won't wobble, will 'ey?"

"No, not then; only when little children worry about all the poor people in the world."

Roy held in his hand all this time a letter he had written to his grandmother the day before, and which his aunt had forgotten to post. "Hulda said she would put a stamp on this when she comes up," he said, "and to-morrow I will put it in the box. Shall I read it to you?"

"'Es, read it to me," said Grace, settling herself back to listen, while Roy began:—

MY DEAR GRANDMA, — How are you. i am rite well i thank you. the perseffor is a little sick, Aunt Helen says he has a cold and is tired. he dont feel like talken mutch the other day they wer a large house on fire and we all went down after it was birnt to look at it the house all tumbled down and we had a dazy picknick A big store cort fire from it but the firemen put it out i was sorry i didnt see that birn to we are having lots of fun here sintz you went away the boys are all bilding houses in there back yards and they make tin rufes out of the tin from the birnt house. tell farther and mother why they dont rite me more letters tell them i am klecting wings of birds now and if you see any birds i havent, shoot them and bring me there wings these are all the ones i have a rusters wing a hens wing a fesants tale and wing a ducks wing a partrage tale a robins wing a kernary wing a blackbirds wing and a hole crowd of yallow hammer feathers and pack of piggon wings and a pile of sparrow wings i had better say goodbye now.

from your remaining grandson,

Roy.

“I wish I tood yite er nice petty letter ’ike ’at,” said Grace, looking at Roy quite enviously.

“Do you? Well, it ’s easy when you get the start. When I was little I thought it was hard too, but now I can write them just as fast as the Perseffer,” said Roy, with a very proud air, as he folded and replaced the letter in the envelope.

“Come, children, I have your beds ready, and am waiting to undress you,” called Hulda. Then they arose, and hand in hand walked out of the room and across the hall. Roy leaned over and whispered once, “Will you do me a favorite [favor], Grace?”

“’Es, I will do er favert for you,” she answered sweetly.

And again he leaned over and whispered, “Why,

promise me you won't cry any more about the Perseffer."

"If a fever of er brain sitness won't make him die, 'en I won't cry a sin'le bit."

"I know he won't die; he could n't, you know, with that sickness, 'cause he only has to get rested."

"It 's an awsul lonesome night, is n't it? and that 's why the reason I don't want to go to bed," said Grace.

"Oh! well, we won't mind. After awhile we 'll be sound asleep and won't know anything about it. And to-morrow Hulda is going to take us over to see how the Perseffer is, and then we're going to see 'Cinderella.'"

"Oh! I forgot it was Cin'erella day," said Grace, her face wreathed in smiles.

Christmas Day was also a very sad one at Dr. Barlow's, and those who anxiously watched by the bedside of little Paul Arlington knew none of its pleasures. Dr. Barlow found out a great deal when he called at Mrs. Stein's. She had not sent for him when Nell was dying, for he had told her she might pass away any moment, and so she was prepared, and knew nothing more could be done for her. He was first of all surprised to learn that the child's father had returned just as she passed away. Fred Myers was still sitting by the side of her body when Dr. Barlow was ushered in, and, seeing the poor man bowed in grief, he tried to speak a few cheery words to him.

"I regret very much that I was not able to save your child, but she was too far gone when I was called in for any treatment to have effect," he said.

"Oh, my poor baby! my poor baby!" moaned Fred Myers, rocking to and fro.

"The only thing left to do now, young man, if you had any love for your little one, is to try to live a different life from this day on. She always spoke of you in the most affectionate manner, and loved you to the last, notwithstanding that you cast her adrift on the world. Could she speak now, I am sure that would be her desire. Come, arouse yourself, and do not be despondent. I, for one, will be your friend and lend you a helping hand if you make the effort."

"Thank you, sir! Oh, thank you, sir!" said poor Fred Myers. "I will try for her sake to redeem myself," reaching out his trembling hand, which the doctor shook with a warm grasp.

"I want you to help me unravel a mystery," said Dr. Barlow, "which I know will interest you as well as me. I suppose you have heard about the little fellow who has been looking after your child, and who sent her this bed and mattress, and also money every week to buy all she needed?"

"Yes, I have heard all about him," replied Fred Myers, wiping away the tears and raising his head. "And it makes me feel more ashamed than ever, to think of a little child doing what a father should have done. I'll never forget him last night when I met him on the hill."

"What!" exclaimed Dr. Barlow, "met him on the hill? What time in the night was it?"

Then Fred Myers told the whole story of his coming home, the strange little figure he saw, standing by a dog, with a doll for his child, and all that happened afterwards.

Dr. Barlow listened eagerly to the story, while tears filled his eyes which it was impossible to keep back.

He brushed them away, and did not speak until Fred Myers had finished his pathetic tale.

Then Dr. Barlow related to Fred Myers the termination of little Paul's midnight visit, and Fred Myers began to weep afresh.

"Of course, I could not have expected you to think of it at such a moment, but I only wish that Mrs. Stein or some one else had seen that he returned home safely last night. His nerves must have undergone a dreadful strain, and it is doubtful whether I can pull him through."

"If it had n't been for him startling me so by telling me my child was dying, I would immediately have taken him home. I did try to persuade him to go. He promised that as soon as he saw Nell he would go straight back. I did not know that he was ill, and yet I might have known, too, that no child in his right senses would start out at midnight on such an errand. He told me that he had a message for me, and that if I was too late to hear it from Nell he would give it to me, as he had it on paper; so I will be obliged to you, sir, if you would think sometime to look in his pockets for it."

"I will, the first opportunity," said the doctor. "And now I must hurry, for every spare moment I want to spend with my little patient."

"I feel so drawn to the child that if he were my very own I do not think I could be more anxious."

"Come down to my office whenever you can, and whatever help you need, let me know. Also give me any information you can as to how Paul obtained the money with which he paid Nell's board."

"I will, sir; I will do all that I can for you and the

little angel who was so good to my neglected child," said Fred Myers.

When Dr. Barlow returned from Mill Hollow, he did not mention to Aunt Helen the news that he had just heard. He thought that she had borne quite enough for one day.

For six weeks, night and day, they anxiously watched and waited before Paul was pronounced out of danger; to Aunt Helen these weeks seemed like six years. She gained one thing, however, during this terrible experience, and that was, a perfect understanding of her little nephew. Her eyes were opened as though a cloud had been lifted from them, and she saw him in a different light altogether. She had many talks with the doctor and his wife about him, and felt ashamed that she should have been so slow in reading and appreciating the child's character, when these two, on such a short acquaintance, seemed to have read it like an open page. "The first time he called on me and told me of poor little Nell, I was never so thoroughly interested in my life," said Dr. Barlow, "and he won my heart on the spot. Such a delicate and refined nature as his is rarely met with, and not always appreciated, I am sorry to say."

"You are right, Doctor, it is not; and I acknowledge that I have never been able to see him as you do until now," said Aunt Helen, with tears in her eyes.

The old family physician from Arlington Heights came to Avondale several times to consult with Dr. Barlow. Sometimes it appeared that Paul was beyond all human aid, when suddenly he would rally again; and so it went on for weeks. One day everything looked encouraging, then again it seemed as if he could

not possibly live. Dr. Barlow was right, — the fever developed into typhoid. That was bad enough, but it might have been worse, as for a few days they feared it would be complicated with some brain trouble. Roy was not so far out of the way, after all, when he called his brother's sickness a fever of the brain. All through his delirium Paul talked of Nell.

"I must take care of her," he would say, "for there is no one else in the world to feed her but me. Her mother is dead, and her father left her without one penny, and poor Mrs. Stein has n't enough bread for her own children, so, of course, she can't feed Nell. Hark! I hear her calling. She is watching for me. Let me go, Aunt Helen, for Mother would if she was here!" And often, while thus talking, he would have jumped from the bed, had it not been that some one was always present to hold him, and try to soothe him.

Once he said, "I knew Aunt Helen would not like to see the books, so I won't show them to her. Mother would. Oh, why won't she love the poor?" he would scream excitedly, often looking up in his aunt's face while he talked, yet not seeming to recognize her.

One time it took two to hold him when he imagined it was the night before Christmas. "You must let me go, for she is dying!" he shrieked.

Often at such times Dr. Barlow's voice quieted him when nothing else would. He seemed to be under the impression that he was Dr. Andrews, and he said once, "You have come to help me look after Nell, and all the poor in Mill Hollow, have n't you?"

"Yes, I have come to help you," Dr. Barlow would say, "so you need not worry any more."

"But when I get rested, then I will help you, — after I sleep about a week."

"Oh, yes, you can then; but try to go to sleep now, or you won't be able to," he would say; and Paul would close his eyes, and somehow he felt satisfied that all was right, and fell asleep with his hand in Dr. Barlow's.

The story of Paul Arlington and Nell Myers had spread from one to another until every household in Avondale and its vicinity was talking about it. Prayers were offered regularly for his safe recovery in the little church where Paul had worshipped and where he had found poor little Nell, and so many called daily at the doctor's house to know the latest news concerning his illness, that it was necessary to place a card on the door stating his condition.

Fred Myers assisted Dr. Barlow in finding out all that was possible after his child was buried.

"Don't you know the man's name who brought the mattress?" he asked Mrs. Stein one day.

"Der man's name vos on der wagon, but I can't t'ink of it," she said.

"If I could find that out I might be able to learn something from him," said Fred Myers.

"I t'ink maybe der childer might know who vos downstairs ven he comes in," said Mrs. Stein.

"I have it," suddenly spoke up Fred Myers. "I will go from house to house and ask if any one saw the wagon when it came, and if they remembered the name on it;" and without waiting another minute, he was off to make inquiries. He did not go very far, in fact, not even out of the house, for Mrs. Carter, of the first floor, remembered the day well. She saw the wagon

stop in front of the house, and saw the bed carried in, and also remembered the name she read on the side of the wagon, "William Harvey, Furniture."

That very day Fred Myers went to Chicago to hunt up William Harvey's store, which he found without much trouble; and before he came out of it, he had unravelled the whole mystery, and obtained a book of poems which Mr. Harvey loaned him to show to the faithful and anxious watchers at the bedside of little Paul.

CHAPTER XXII

THEY now knew just what little Paul had been doing for weeks past. It was now not a difficult thing to understand the entire cause of his illness.

Aunt Helen went off into a room alone to read the little book of poems, for Paul Arlington's sweet nature was gradually unfolding itself before his young aunt's eyes, until now she only wondered how it was that she could ever have misunderstood him.

"Dear little fellow, how well it is done!" she thought, as she first examined the cover with the forget-me-nots painted in blue, and the silk cord to match, which tied the pages together in such a dainty manner. Then she started to read the first poem of little Nell. The tears came afresh after each poem was read. She remembered seeing some of them before, but knew that the one regarding little Nell was new. She leaned back in the chair and thought of all the planning the child had done to get up such a book, and to compose the poem about the beggar child, and she readily imagined the great strain to his sensitive nature in visiting Nell in her dying condition. Then the effort which it must have been to sell the books; it only surprised her that he had not succumbed to the strain long before. "If I had only insisted on his telling me what he was painting," she thought; "but how did I know? I never dreamed it could be anything but

some little Christmas cards he was getting up. But it is no time now for tears; if he only lives, that is all I ask;" and, bathing her face in cold water, she took her place by the little invalid again.

If his parents had walked in during his illness, they would never have known their boy, so great was the change in him. His face looked old and emaciated, and his hair was cut close to his head. "The weight was too much for him," Dr. Barlow had said, "and his head must be made as cool as possible;" so he cut it himself, and laid the thick golden locks carefully in a box, to be put away and saved.

Old Ned, the doctor's coachman, was very sad all through Paul's illness. He had taken a great fancy to him, for Paul had always spoken as pleasantly to him as he did to Dr. Barlow whenever he saw him on the street. To have Paul in his master's house so ill made him feel as though he were one of the family and belonged to them. Every day he was asked repeatedly, by nearly every one he met, whether the little boy whom they found at midnight by their door was improving.

His last duty before retiring for the night was to walk up on tiptoe to the sick chamber, and ask his master how the patient was.

"Ole Ned jes cum up, sah, ter heah 'bout de little chile," he would say; "caze I can't shet me eyes nohow befo' mawnin' till I'se know. It 'pears like I'se knowed him mos' all me life, sah; doan yo' think his gwine ter pull through dish yer fever."

"I am hoping so, Ned, and I am doing my best to save him," Dr. Barlow would say.

"Yaas, I'se t'ink yo' are, sah. The Lawd has sholy

sent him ter yo'self ter tek keer o' him, and ain' that de sign His gwine ter guide yo' wif His pow'ful han'? Hit 'pears dat way ter me, sah."

"Perhaps you are right," the doctor said. "So far I have every reason to believe it is so."

"Thank de Lawd! Thank de Lawd!" murmured Ned to himself, as he slowly descended the stairs, shaking his white woolly head.

Dr. Andrews had made several visits to Avondale during Paul's illness, and after several consultations with Dr. Barlow and Aunt Helen, they decided not to acquaint his parents with the seriousness of it. They knew that if they had any knowledge of it they would return immediately, and nothing could be worse for Mr. Arlington than to return then, it being the very worst season of the year. All the letters had spoken encouragingly of his condition, telling of his steady improvement, and the hope that by spring he would be entirely restored to health. To send them the news that their oldest child was very ill, and might not live, would most likely give Mr. Arlington a relapse, and only make matters worse instead of better; so they decided to keep them ignorant of his condition until they knew at least beyond a doubt that he could not live.

Dr. Andrews never went into the sick room on these visits. It was thought best to keep him out; for Paul was under the impression that Dr. Barlow was Dr. Andrews, and to see the two might confuse and excite him. They would not even have a trained nurse for this very reason. Dr. Barlow wanted as few as possible in the sick room, and that Paul should see only the faces he had been accustomed to from the time he

was taken ill. Mrs. Barlow was a born nurse; and under her supervision and the doctor's, Aunt Helen did nearly as well. Her whole heart was in it, and it was wonderful how apt she became for one who never had been accustomed to sickness. Every day, at his earnest request, they sent a telegram to Dr. Andrews. He had been engaged in some new work among the poor since Paul left Arlington Heights, which he intended as a surprise for him. He had started a mission in the house where Irish Moll was found. It had all been renovated, and reading-rooms and amusements were established there to keep the children from the streets at night. Food also was given out to those in need of it, and meetings were held twice a week, at which Dr. Andrews or some other minister spoke to the children and tried to teach them to live better lives. Many of them remembered Paul, and would never forget the day that they saw him with Irish Moll. Dr. Andrews had also hunted up Bill Jones, of whom Paul had spoken frequently; and Bill was now assistant janitor of the mission-house, attending to the fires, cleaning windows, running errands, etc. He knew it was all brought about by the little fellow who had spoken to him so kindly that day, for so Dr. Andrews had told him; and when Paul was ill, all the children were told of it at the meetings, and those who had seen him felt very sad indeed when they heard it, and looked eagerly for Dr. Andrews' coming on his visiting days, to learn the latest news regarding him.

"Say, boss, how 's that air little feller gettin' long?" asked Bill Jones. "I'm tryin' me best ter keep straight and earn an honest penny for me old mother, all owin' to him, boss."

"I guess he is going to pull through," said Dr. Andrews. "And how glad he will be when he gets well to hear what a good steady boy you are!"

"If I'm stiddy, it's all owin' to him; and you tell him when yer see him, will yer, boss?"

"I certainly will as soon as he is well enough," said Dr. Andrews.

By the time Paul was able to sit up, the story had spread all over Chicago, and found its way into the papers. Many people were inquiring for the little book of poems. Several went into Young's store and asked if they had any copies for sale, for they remembered hearing Paul say on the street, as he handed his books to pedestrians, that they were made just like some that they sold at Young's store, only the poetry was different. The clerks told all that they knew of the little fellow, Paul's reason for wanting one of the little books being clear to them now. It was simply that he desired one as a sample to make his own by. "I would not mind having several hundred of them," said Mr. Young. "I could easily find a sale for them."

When Dr. Andrews heard all this, and saw the article in the paper, which Aunt Helen had sent on, and how anxious people were to get even a copy of the little book, he went immediately to Chicago and saw Mr. Young, and together they made arrangements to have as many copies printed of Paul's book as could be sold. They still had the copy at the doctor's that Mr. Harvey had loaned Fred Myers, but afterwards Harvey consented to give it to those nearest to Paul who did not own one.

Every one in Avondale was asking for the little book, and wanted to know whether one could be had.

Many inquired at the doctor's house, and they were sorry that they had none to give them. Then Dr. Andrews came and told them of his arrangement with Mr. Young, and said that the money obtained by the sale of the books should be used in aiding the poor of Mill Hollow. They all thought this an excellent idea, and one that would be a source of great pleasure to little Paul when he recovered. But of course it was not mentioned to him at present. Every one wore bright and smiling faces in the sick room and talked only of things that were cheerful and pleasing. Nell's message to her father was found in one of Paul's pockets and given to him. He cried many times over it, and carried it about with him always. It ran thus: "Tell Father I know he did n't mean to leave me, and that he would be a good man if the liquor did n't set his brain on fire and make him crazy. Tell him not to drink any more, and be good like he used to be to Mother and me before he drank that awful stuff. Tell him I'm in Heaven now with Mother, and we are waiting for him there, and watching him every day, only we are not hungry and cold any more. I am sorry I cannot see him once more, but I love him and forgive him, like Mother did."

Mr. Harvey, the furniture man, had become very much interested in Fred Myers when he learned that he was the little beggar girl's father, whom Paul Arlington had supported by the sale of his books. He saw that the man was thoroughly penitent and trying to make amends for the years he had wasted, and offered him a position in his factory when he heard that he had been a cabinet-maker.

"You will always have steady employment with me

as long as you are sober and industrious," he said; and Fred Myers, with tears in his eyes, thanked him again and again, and told him that he felt sure he would never have cause to regret taking him in his employ.

"Having this with me always," he continued, taking Nell's message out of his pocket and handing it to Mr. Harvey, "I can never go astray again."

Mr. Harvey took the paper and read every word of it, and handing it back, said, "Well, if you could do so with that always with you, your case would be a hopeless one."

During Paul's convalescence old Ned and he had become great friends. They had many little talks together when Ned brought his meals up, as he often did nowadays, for Paul generally ate at the same time the family did. Ned, of course, remained in the room to wait upon him.

Paul learned a great deal from Ned about slavery. He was on Mrs. Barlow's grandfather's place in the South before the war and had lived in the family ever since, leaving the old place to come North with Mrs. Barlow when she married the young physician.

To have been a real live slave made Ned appear, in Paul's eyes, a very interesting person, and he never tired of hearing him relate the incidents in his early life before the war.

Paul was very glad to hear that Mrs. Barlow's grandfather was a good and kind master, and that all his slaves were treated well.

"I 'se 'members well, Marse Paul, dat happy day when de good news com'," said Ned. "How dem darkies dance an' sing! dey sholy did; but my ole Mammy say dat she wus glad o' de great 'casion fo'

dem dat had hard marsers, but fo' herse'f, she wuz kin'er skeered an' mo'nful."

"Do you mean she was n't glad to be free?" asked Paul, in surprise.

"'Deed she wus, 'cep' for dish heah reason. She was mo'nful 'bout de 'sponsibilities ter know wot she gwine ter do ter feed ten chillrens. Yer see dat made de diffunce, caze befo' de war she nebber wus so pore, but dey had some food ter eat and a place ter lay dey heads, an' she wus not berry young any mo', and hit wus de awful 'sponsibility, dat wus all, dat made her mos' crazy."

"Yes, that was dreadful," said Paul, heaving a sigh when he thought of the poor negro woman's predicament, to be suddenly thrown on the world with ten children, though some were able to work. He could fully sympathize with Ned's mother, for had he not tried to support only one, and what a hard time he had had of it, nearly losing his life in the end.

"Where was your father, Ned? Could n't he work for his family?"

"Yaas, he sholy could, if de Lawd had n't tuk him ter hebben befo' de war; but I 'se want ter tell yer 'bout dat happy day for Mammy when Marse Johnston call all his slaves togedder and tol' dem dat dey nebber hab ter go way frum dat hum ef dey lak ter stay.

"He said, 'I 'se not gwine ter 'suade yer, but jes gwine ter tell yer I 'se pay yer all gud wagers ef yer stay, frum dish here berry day.' An' dat 's huccum we always lib wif Marse Johnston. I 'clar ter goodness! yer ought jus' see old Mammy's face when she tuk in dat s'prisen news. She luk jes lak she find a gol' mine; and, ef yer b'live me, Marse Paul, ebber one of

dem darkies stay wif Marse Johnston fo' long time, and I 'se am de only one left, dat is in dat berry same fambly, ter dish day, an' I 'se hopes ter serve in it ter de best ob my 'bility till I 'se jine de odders who hab gwine befo'.

"I 'se 'members well how ebberbody lak Marse Henry Johnston. He was de fine gen'l'man fo' yer; he waz Misses Barlow's grandfadder, and her fadder was Marse George Johnston; but sholy he wus de berry image of Marse Henry, and wus jes as gud.

"Ebber since he waz born, I 'se had de great pleasure ob waitin' on him till I 'se cum up to dish here place wif Misses Barlow. So yer see, Marse Paul, I 'se sholy b'long ter dish fambly."

"I am very glad you happened to be in such a good family," said Paul. "Was it so that some of the masters used to beat their slaves?"

"Sholy hit wuz, an' I 'se gwine ter tell yer 'bout dat;" but suddenly Ned hesitated. It had just occurred to him that he had been warned not to talk about anything exciting whenever he was left with the little patient, and he had always been very cautious. To describe the rough treatment many slaves had suffered from the cruel masters would be very exciting, he thought.

"What were you going to say?" asked Paul, wondering why he stopped so suddenly.

Ned cleared his throat, coughed two or three times, then said, —

"If yer 'll jes 'scuse me, Marse Paul, I 'se ain't gwine ter tell yer no mo' 'bout dat special subjec'. I 'se got obstructions ter 'bey, so doan coax me 'bout dat ter day."

Ned looked so serious while he spoke that Paul laughed outright.

"I know that you are afraid it might hurt me to hear about it; is that the reason, Ned?"

"You doan know, Marse Paul, hit might, dat 's a trufe; and I 'se got my specified orders on dat subjec', and ole Ned gwine tek the best keer ob yer, when I 'se hab de 'sponsibilities ob yer."

"Thank you," said Paul, in his old-fashioned way. "You are very kind to be so careful of me. Everybody is so good and careful, Ned. I wonder why it is, when I give people so much trouble?"

Paul's face assumed quite a serious expression as he looked up from his waiter (for he was eating his dinner) and gazed off into space.

"Now, doan yo' look lak dat, Marse Paul! doan do hit!" implored Ned, stepping over in front of Paul's chair, then kneeling and clasping his hands in a most beseeching manner. Ned's attitude caused Paul's expression to change immediately, and he could not help smiling at his earnestness.

"Dare, dat 's hit, leetle Marse," he exclaimed, joyfully, when Paul put on a broad smile. "Hit brek ole Ned's heart ter hab yer look lak yer lost ebber friend in der hol' worl', an' talk lak yer waz a wicked sinner; an' de Lawd hissef knows yo' are not if yer don' yo'se'f."

"Oh, Ned, don't talk that way!" said Paul, in great earnestness, leaning back and clasping his hands in his old earnest way. "Nell always used to think I was so good; but her mind was weak, and she could n't think right, you know. But your mind is strong, and you know better. When I tell you some of the dread-

ful things I have done, you will change your mind about me. You must know all about people to tell how good they are, Ned, you know;" and Paul smiled and unclasped his hands, placing one on Ned's white woolly head as he still knelt before him. This little act of affection so pleased old Ned that he never spoke or moved for a moment, for fear that he would quickly remove his hand; and he wished that it were possible for him always to be at the feet of such a sweet young master, and would always have been ready to do his bidding.

"Yo' don' know yo'se'f, bressed chile," he said, after a pause, "but ebberbody else am aware of de fac'," and Ned closed his eyes and shook his head very solemnly.

Just then the curtains parted, and Aunt Helen stepped in, followed by Dr. and Mrs. Barlow.

Old Ned jumped up quickly, rather abashed at being discovered in such a posture, but not before they had all seen the beautiful little tableau. The doctor put him at his ease immediately, however, by saying, "Well, I see, Paul, you have Ned at last where you have placed us all, — at your feet;" and as he spoke he kneeled in a most profound manner before the little invalid's chair, where Ned had just been.

This made them all laugh, and Paul said, "I was just telling Ned I did n't see what made every one so kind to me, when I have given so much trouble. And Aunt Helen," he added, glancing up at her shyly, "I don't see how she can love me one bit."

"Your Aunt Helen always did love you, darling," she said, leaning over and taking one of the little transparent hands in hers, and smoothing it tenderly.

"But I love you more now, because I understand you better; and it was all my fault that you did not confide in me more, and you are not to blame for anything you did; so do not trouble your little heart any more about such thoughts."

"You know, my dear boy, when any one feels sure in his heart that he is doing right, but finds out afterward that he has been mistaken, he cannot be held responsible, because he acted at the time, as he honestly thought, for the best," said Mrs. Barlow.

"Yes, I acted, as I honestly thought, for the best," repeated the little philosopher, in his same old earnest way.

"Then gloomy thoughts away, away;
You can no longer with me stay.
I'll waste no time to grieve and pine,
O'er sins they tell me are not mine,"

said Dr. Barlow, making them all laugh again. "How is that for a poem on the spur of the moment?" he asked, looking at Paul's smiling face.

"Did you really make it up just on the moment?" asked Paul, in surprise. "Why, you would make a splendid poet, Doctor, I think."

"Thank you," said the doctor, with a polite bow. "I am very glad indeed to be so appreciated; but I must leave you all now, as I must see some patients. And my little one here must lie down immediately and take a long sleep."

The room was darkened, and Aunt Helen sat beside him. She thought at one time that he was asleep, when he suddenly opened his eyes and said, "I am glad you know me now, Aunt Helen. It took a long while for you to get acquainted with me and for me

with you, did n't it? And you love the poor now too, don't you?"

"Yes, dear, I have much more sympathy for them now, thanks to the lesson you taught me; but you can never expect me to love them as you do."

"They are all so good to me here, Aunt Helen; and don't you think I have been an awful trouble to them all and to you?"

"They tell me you have not, Paul; and the doctor said that if you were to be ill and under his care, this is just the place he would want you to be."

"I wonder what makes him so good to me?"

"Just because he loves you, dear; and he has taken a great interest in you ever since the day that you came to tell him about Nell; and, you know, when we love any one it is never a trouble to do anything for them."

"Then I did n't love you, Aunt Helen," he said honestly, but with a sadness in his voice; "because if I had, I would have done everything you wished me to, and I thought I had to do what the Bible said."

"If you did not love me, darling, it was not your fault, but all my own, I am afraid."

"But I love you now, anyway, Aunt Helen, and I am sorry I did not tell you all," he said, his eyes closing while he spoke.

"Yes, I know you are," she answered, bending over the little wasted form. Then two little thin arms wound about her neck, and she lifted him on her lap and softly sang the lullaby that his mother had been accustomed to sing to the children when they were babies; and even when they were older, and not well, they had asked to be rocked and soothed to sleep

in the same old baby fashion, and begged to hear the words of the sweet lullaby they had known from infancy:—

“Go to sleep, my darling, for the night has come ;
Shadows fast are falling with the setting sun ;
Softly blow the breezes, lulling thee to rest ;
Under eaves the swallows seek their downy nests.
Slumber ! Slumber ! sweetly ! Slumber on
Till again the sunbeams waken thee at dawn.”

CHAPTER XXIII

THE robins had come again, and so had the daisies and buttercups, and with them a pale little face made its appearance, for the first time for several months. Ned carried Paul down to sit on the side porch on warm days now. He had never known before what it was to be an invalid, and not to feel strong, and able to come and go at will.

He wondered if he would ever be able to run and romp again, for even yet his knees trembled when he started to walk, and often he would have fallen, had not some one been there to support him.

To sit under the vine-covered porch was a pleasant change for the little invalid, for he saw many things to interest him; old Ned had to work in the garden now every day, besides keeping an eye on Paul, who had become quite dependent on him, and he made an excellent nurse for the convalescing little patient.

The doctor would not listen to Paul's going home, and so Aunt Helen divided her time between the two houses. All in the doctor's house wore smiling faces now; they could not hide the joy that they felt in the recovery of the little boy who was found that cold night by their door, and to whom they had become warmly attached.

For weeks the servants had spoken in whispers, and walked on their toes, and wore the gravest faces; but

now they had all resumed their natural manner, and sang and laughed among themselves, anxious to wait upon Paul, and to be useful in any way possible to him.

Old Ned wore a broad grin on his old wrinkled face constantly, and hummed low to himself the old tunes his mammy sang years ago.

This one seemed to be his favorite, and Paul often listened to the words, while Ned worked among the flowers.

“Cum along, chillun, cum along now,
Fo’ de mo’nful day is past ;
Cum sing de happy song ter de Lawd,
Fo’ de joy dat cum at last.

“Oh, chillun, sing away,
An’ doan keer what dey say ;
Jes keep right on till dar no mo’ bref,
An’ den kneel down an pray.

“Cum along, chillun, lif’ up yer voice,
Doan let dish chance go by ;
Or de Lawd won’ send sech a joy agin,
But He ’ll make yer moan an’ cry.”

“Oh, chillun, sing away, etc.”

Frequently while at work, Ned walked up to the porch to hold a few moments’ conversation, or to listen to some suggestion of Paul’s on the laying out of the doctor’s garden, and whether he agreed with him or not, he always carried out the suggestion, if it were possible. He soon discovered that Paul had wonderfully good ideas, and that it was advisable to carry them out.

One day he said, “Sholy, Marse Paul, I ’se nebber know of a chile dat hab sech pow’ful idees ’bout flowers ; huccum yer ter learn ’bout mos’ ebberry one, and jes whar ter plant dem?”

"I learned by watching Pat, and by watching the flowers myself," replied Paul. "Pat was a splendid gardener, and, just think, it has been about nine months since I saw him, the longest time I have been without seeing him in my life, Ned."

Ned was conscious of a little twinge of jealousy whenever the subject of Pat, the Beechwood gardener, was brought up, for Paul always spoke of him in such glowing terms that poor Ned always felt very insignificant in comparison.

"'Pears ter me dat Pat wuz a mos' s'prisen wonderfu' man," said Ned, glancing at Paul from the corner of his eye, while he leaned on a hoe by the porch step.

"Yes, he is a wonderful man, I think," said Paul. "He is so smart about things."

"Is it de kin' ob smartness dat dey learn in books, Marse Paul?" he asked, rather sadly, for if it was, he thought it was no wonder Paul liked him so much, and he could never hope to be thought the same of.

"No, he did not learn his smartness in books," replied Paul, which was a great relief to Ned to hear. "He just learn'd by working every day, by osservation [observation] I think you call it; when you learn things without books or going to school, and by experience, you know, when you live long and see a great deal."

"'Pears ter me, Marse Paul, ole Ned ken learn mon-s'rous lot by dat way yer say obzervation, wif no books an' no school; doan yer think yo'se'f I'se ken learn lak yer Pat ob Beechwood."

"Why, of course you can; you are learning that way all the time."

But Ned did not understand, and was afraid to ask an explanation for fear of showing his ignorance.

"I don't think Pat is any smarter than you," continued Paul. "Why, he hardly knows anything about the slaves in the South, and I have learned more from you than I would from a book."

This flattering remark greatly pleased old Ned, and assured him that if Pat was thought more of, it was not, after all, because he was smarter than he, and perhaps in time the little invalid would think just as much of him.

"I 'se tell yer, Marse Paul," he said, shaking his head, "I 'se gwine ter stan' by yo' on ebbery 'casion. Doan go anywhar by yo'se'f again when pore folks are suffrin' fer bread, kase ef yer hab ter go, 'members ole Ned 'ill tek yer, and nebber, nebber go alone."

Paul could not help smiling at the serious tone with which he said this, and he knew why he said it.

"You need never be afraid of me going alone to Mill Hollow again, Ned. You see I am older and have learned a great deal since I have been here."

"I 'se mighty glad yer learned dat; it am s'prisen what yer learn in de time ob sickness. I 'se know by my own 'sperience on de berry same 'casions," said Ned.

One bright day in May, Paul sat in his usual place on the side porch, while Ned worked in the garden close by, keeping a watch over him. Aunt Helen was to come that day with Roy and Grace. All three children looked forward to these visits with the greatest pleasure. The children had been to see Paul several times, but their visits were short, as it did not take very much to tire him, for his nerves were still very weak.

Roy's company especially often proved to be too hilarious.

"Here cum de lil chillun up de road," called Ned. "Dey am jes as sweet as angels. Lil Roy allers look lak he wuz kin' ob skeered when he see you, Marse Paul, and de lil girl look lak she was gwine ter cry de first time she see yer. Dey sholy am berry sorry for yer, sence yer hab been sick."

"I think Robin has been sorry, but I don't think Roy could be so dreadfully sorry about anything," said Paul. "He is one of the jolly kind, you know, and never wants to think about things, — just to have lots of fun all the time. I wish I could be jolly and think too," continued the little philosopher, gazing out through the trees and over the flowers to the road beyond where, now and then, he caught a glimpse of his aunt, Roy, and Grace nearing the house. Roy was ahead on a run, hitting everything he passed with a switch he had broken from some bush.

"I 'clar ter goodness he sholy is jolly lil feller, an' ain' gwine mek hissef sick wid de 'sponsibilities of de pore," said Ned, laughing and shaking his woolly head, watching with Paul the antics of Roy as he skipped gayly along, whistling a popular tune.

"But nebber mine, Marser Paul," he went on quickly, noticing Paul's envious look, and thinking he was feeling badly at not being able to do as Roy did. "Doan be a-lookin' kin'er sad 'bout dat, caze berry soon yer will be running an' skipping jes lak him agin, an' ole Ned 'll run a race wid yer, fo' berry long."

"No, Ned, I shall never be like Roy," said Paul, shaking his head in a very decided way. "I tried so many times when I was well, but I had to give it up. It is

just this way, you see. I have to think, and Roy don't; and when you have to think so much, you can't be jolly."

"Yer hab ter think! Why, me bressed chile, we all hab ter think. How cum dat gwine ter keep yer frum gettin' strong an' bein' 'bout on yer legs agin, I'se lak ter know."

"It's hard to explain just what kind of thinking I mean, Ned."

"I'se s'pose hit would be mighty hard ter 'splain dat dey subjec' an' mek hit clair ter me understan'in', Marse Paul; caze I ken nebber see how cum thinkin' could hab anything ter do wid keepin' yer off yer legs. 'Pon me word, I'se doan, an' fer yer ter be ez jolly ez de lil feller comman up de road.

"But we ain' got no mo' time ter specify our 'pinions on dish har argyment now. We will jes pos'pone hit till de nex' 'casion we hab togedder," and with these words Ned walked down the gravel path to open the gate for the visitors.

The children had been warned never to make any remarks to Paul about his appearance, for Aunt Helen knew they would be shocked at the great change in him the first time they saw him, and she tried to prepare them for it.

"Do not speak about his sickness at all, children," she had said. "But talk about everything that is bright and pleasant."

"I'll just tell him he looks as strong as a giant," said Roy.

"'Es, jes as strong as er giant," repeated Grace. "At's what we say," so every time they saw him they greeted him with the same words.

Roy, as usual, was first to arrive, with sparkling eyes and ruddy complexion, full of animal spirits, presenting a great contrast to the little pale invalid in his dressing-gown among the cushions.

"Hello, Perseffer! How are you? Why, you look as strong as a giant," he said, coming up close to Paul and kissing him. As he did so, Paul dropped the book he had been reading.

"Never mind; I'll get it," said Roy, quickly, as Paul made efforts to stretch over the side of the chair for it. "You might hurt yourself, Persef, doing that, and get a collapse into the fever again."

"Thank you," said Paul, laughing, as Roy again placed the book on his lap. "But I've lost my place now, and if I can't find it, that might give me one," and they laughed heartily at what they thought a very funny joke indeed.

Just before Aunt Helen and Grace reached the porch, Roy ran to meet them and whispered to Grace, "Don't forget to tell him he looks as strong as a giant."

"No, I won't forget," said Grace, with a very serious face, and, stepping up immediately, said, "You look as strong as er giant, Bruver Paul. Are you yight well now?"

"I am getting well as fast as I can," he replied, bending over to kiss her.

"Has you dot a dood appletite now, and tan you eat woast beef and hot takes yet?"

"I have had some roast beef, but no hot cakes," replied Paul, while he and the rest laughed.

"Did n't you find your place in the book, Perseffer?" asked Roy.

"I will look for it some other time. I want to talk, now."

"Why don't you have a book-keeper [book-marker] in it, then you'd never lose it," said Roy.

"A book-keeper!" said Aunt Helen, laughing, "I guess you mean book-marker, don't you?"

"No, I mean a book-keeper. You know, to keep your place in a book. Not a book-marker to make a mark in it."

"It is a book-marker because it marks the place where you left off by being placed in that page," said Aunt Helen, trying to explain.

"What is your book called, Perseffer?" continued Roy, not paying much attention to his mistake.

"It is called, 'The Swiss Family Robinson,' and it is a fine book, but I can only read one chapter a day. I just begin to get acquainted with them all when I have to stop short."

"My! I don't think I'd like to read about the son of a robin, in a Swiss family. I like books about the Indians, wars, and bull fights. And do you know, I am awful mad at the liberian [librarian] of our Sunday School, 'cause he won't give me any book I ask for. Guess what he sent me last Sunday, Perseffer?"

"I could n't," replied Paul.

"Why, 'How Molly Helped Her Grandmother,' just as if I wanted to know how Molly helped her grandmother."

"I don't think I should like that either," said Paul, laughing, as he had been doing ever since Roy made his appearance.

"I'm sorry you didn't get to see 'Cinderella,' Persef. I tell you it was a fine play; was n't it, Grace?"

"'Es, it was a fine play, an' Cin'erella dot out of er titchen where her sisters put her, and er Prince put on er gass sipper, and it fit her, and 'en she was all dessed in a petty dess and danced at er ball."

"Grace always wanted the spy-glass [opera-glass] and would n't let me hardly have it at all," said Roy. "It's fun to look through it, for, Persef, it brings everything smack up close to you."

"When I go, I don't like things so close. It does n't seem so real as a little way off," said Paul.

"Oh, it does to me, seems realer. I just think everything is just living and going on like we are every day; and when the curtain goes down, then I remember they were only playing all the time. It's fun, though, Persef, and I tell you I was glad I was alive that day."

"We was a little late for the show, and the banders were playing, but we got our seats all right, Persef, for they were preserved for us."

"Now, you little chatterbox, please be quiet for just a few moments, and give some one else a chance to say a word," said Aunt Helen. "Go over and talk to Ned for a while." After he had run off, she said, "I have some good news for you, Paul. Can you guess?"

"Anything about Father and Mother?" he asked.

"No."

"Oh! I know," he said suddenly, "Dr. Andrews is coming."

"You are right; he is coming with your father and mother, and will stay a whole week in Avondale. I am going with him to New York to meet the steamer, and we shall all return together."

"Oh, won't it be a happy time?" said Paul. "I don't feel a bit homesick about Beechwood. How glad

I shall be to see everybody; and won't Dr. Andrews have lots to tell me about the Home children, Pat and Aleck, and everybody in Arlington Heights? You are glad now I found the organ-grinder that day I went out for a walk, are n't you?"

"Certainly, I am very glad indeed that it all turned out as it did, and that the old man had the best of care during the last weeks of his life, and that his little lame girl has found such a good home, and is growing stronger every day. But it might have proved otherwise, Paul, for all the poor miserable people one sees are not, as a rule, of the same character as the blind man happened to be, and it is not safe for a child to pick up such acquaintances on the street."

"But I knew he was good, Aunt Helen, indeed, I did," said Paul, earnestly. "I could tell by his face. And even if he was n't good, he was sick and blind, and a man who is sick and blind couldn't do anybody any harm, if he was bad," continued the little philosopher. "And how dreadful it would have been if he had died in their little hot room with no food, for when he got too weak to go on the street, they would n't have had any money at all, and perhaps would have starved to death."

"Very likely," said Aunt Helen; "but they did n't, so do not try to picture all sorts of horrible things that might have happened."

Baby Grace had been standing by Paul's chair, listening to this conversation, watching his thin face, which always made her feel very sad, and finally she said, "I was dawn to make poetries about er birds and fowers when I dot a big dirl, jes 'ike you, Bruver Paul, but den I don't want ter det sick 'ike you. Does eveybodies det sick what makes poetries?"

"Why, no, of course not, Robin," said Paul. "Why, I know lots of poets who made poetry for years, and I never heard that it made them sick. There's Shakspeare, Longfellow, Tennyson, and ever so many others, who wrote hundreds and hundreds of verses."

"Well, 'en how did it make you sit wiv er brain wobblin' sitness," she asked.

This made Paul and Aunt Helen laugh. "Why, who said I had a brain wobblin' sickness?" asked Paul.

"Why, Roy say 'at you had, 'tause your brain wobbled all ayound and 'at's why the reason you made too much poetries."

"Roy is mistaken this time," said Aunt Helen. "Paul had a fever because he got very tired by working so hard for poor little Nell, but he is getting all right now, and in a week or two we will have him home."

"Oh, I'm awsul glad," said Grace, clapping her hands. "'Tause I'm dettin' tired wivout you, Bruver Paul, and it's awsul lonesome evy day and nights."

"Yes, we do miss you every day," said Roy, hearing Grace's last remark, as he stepped up on the porch. "There's nobody to tell me about bugs now, and I've found some new ones I'm saving for your cabinet."

"I hope you killed them quickly," said Paul, "and did n't let them suffer."

"Well, I did n't have any chloform in a bottle like you, 'cause Aunt Helen said she could n't intrust me with it, but, Persef, I found a bottle of benzine, and then when Hulda was n't looking, I got some vinegar out of the jug. Then I mixed that with the benzine in a tin can, and I put the bugs in, then laid a stone on top, and, when I looked the next day, they were the deadest bugs you ever saw in your whole life."

"'Es, 'ey were jes as ded as 'ey tood be, Bruver Paul, an' I des 'ey did n't feel er 'east bit of pain," said Grace, noticing Paul's look of surprise.

"Well, I'd rather you would n't kill any more until I come home," said Paul. "I'm afraid they did n't die easily that way. They must have struggled a good while in the vinegar and benzine before they died."

"Oh, no, they did n't," said Roy, quickly. "You know I stuck each one to a little block of wood with a pin, and tied a big nail to every block, so they would n't come up; so, you see, they drowned right straight off."

Paul gave a shudder as he said, "Oh, that was dreadful, Roy! How would you like some one to run a big iron spike through you? That is just how a pin felt going through them."

"Oh, that was n't anything," said Roy, in his off-handed way. "You see, as soon as I put the pin in, as quick as lightning I put them into the benzine; and they were drowned before they had time to think there was something going through them."

"I am afraid, Roy, it will be necessary to report you to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals," said Aunt Helen. "It does not make any difference how small an insect it is, it is downright cruelty to run a pin through its body. And I am sure that neither Paul nor Grace would be guilty of such an act."

"'Deed, I did n't think that was a cruel way to kill them," said Roy. "I thought it was the quickest after chloforn; but I'll bring it to you when I catch another, Perseffer. I was kind to a poor old catapillar one day, anyhow. He was sick, and I tried awful hard to get him well again. He must have had a broken back,

because he was all screwed up in a bunch, and could hardly walk. I just said, 'Now, Mr. Catapillar, I won't kill you, I will just be kind like the Perseffer.' Did n't I, Grace?" he asked, turning toward her.

"'Es, he did, Bruver Paul, he was awsul kind 'at day."

"I just went straight upstairs," continued Roy, "and got the bottle of fennel zodiac [Phenol Sodique] medicine and poured it all over his back; but it did n't cure him, after all, Persef, it gave him a fit. He must have been dying, and did n't want to be disturved. It was the worst fit I ever saw an animal have; and so, of course, I had to kill him, after all. Because, Perseffer, I just thought if I was a catapillar in a fit and could talk, I would say, 'Oh, please kill me as quick as you can,' so I smashed him with a cobblestone. But say," he went on, without stopping, "why don't you come home now? Aunt Helen can take care of you, can't you?" he asked, turning toward his aunt.

"Yes, I am sure I could look after him now," Aunt Helen replied; "but Dr. Barlow wants to keep him right here for a little while longer, — until he can walk better, anyhow; and we are so grateful for all he has done for Paul and for me, that I must consent to do just as he desires in the matter."

"I want to go home now, and yet I don't want to leave Dr. Barlow," said Paul. "But even if I went now," Dr. Barlow said I could not work in the garden; and, you know, I would only have to sit still nearly all the time, anyhow. Ned said he fixed the garden just the way I wanted it; so I guess it will be all right.

"Dr. Barlow has been so good to me, and made me well, you know; so I don't want to tell him that I want to leave him and go home."

"I think doctors must be awful smart men, Persef. Do you think Dr. Barlow is as smart as George Washington?" said Roy.

The little philosopher blinked his eyes thoughtfully for a moment, and then said, —

"Well, I think any man who can keep people from dying must be smarter than George Washington. But then that's a different thing, which is n't on the same subject that we were talking about."

"I think it's on the same subject," said Roy. "But why can't anybody say if a man is smarter than another man, no matter what the subject is?"

"Well, they can," said Paul, looking very serious, scratching his head and stopping to think again, while Aunt Helen looked out over the lawns and flowers, as though indifferent to the conversation, but was listening very attentively all the time, and anxious to hear the outcome of this argument.

"Yes, they can, if they want to," repeated Paul. "But we were not talking about that; and you ought to finish one subject first, and not start another right in the middle of it. But I would n't say it that way, anyhow. I would say, 'Who do you think the bravest, — doctors or soldiers?'"

"Well, who do you, then, Persef?"

"I think doctors are the bravest and best. They do more than soldiers, because they save lives."

"Yes, but a soldier saves his country, don't he? And if he does kill people, he has to do it, or else they would kill him. You know, Persef, you have to kill in self-offence [defence] but, I guess, a doctor's a good trade, too. Maybe you would like it now, better than being that thing Mr. Timothy Jenks says, 'cause I would n't

look after the poor Persef if your trade had to be called such a funny name as Phil Anther's fist."

This made Paul laugh so heartily that Aunt Helen feared the consequences, but she was obliged to laugh herself, too, for Roy broke out in one of his merry peals when he saw Paul so amused, and even baby Grace joined in, though she did n't exactly understand the joke.

"What was that you said, Roy?" Aunt Helen asked.

"Why, old Mr. Timothy Jenks said" (he went on laughing all the time) "that if the Persef's trade when he gets a man is to look after the poor, it had to be called Phil Anther's fist;" and with the last word Roy burst forth again in one of his loud peals of laughter, which could be heard all over the place, and brought old Ned around to the porch to ascertain what the fun was about.

"What does he mean, Paul? Explain it to me, won't you?" and as soon as he could compose himself sufficiently, he told Aunt Helen about their visit to Timothy Jenks's that winter afternoon, and that he called him a name that sounded to Roy like Phil Anther's fist.

It then dawned upon Aunt Helen what it all meant. "Oh, I see," she said, laughing, "he called you a philanthropist."

"Yes, that's it," said Paul; and again all laughed, while old Ned wiped his eyes and fairly shook his sides, after he heard the explanation and watched Roy's red face and heard his merry laughter, which was so contagious that every one was forced to join in it.

"I 'clar ter goodness," he said, "he sholy is a jolly lil feller. An' ain' gwine ter mek hisse'f sick wid de 'sponsibilities ob de pore, I 'se suah 'bout dat."

In the midst of all the laughter, Dr. Barlow drove in the gate.

"What a happy-looking little group! I am very glad to see you both," he said to the children, "and I see that you have brought much sunshine with you." Then taking a chair, he placed Roy on one knee and Grace on the other. "You have brought the roses to your brother's cheeks, and he is looking unusually bright this afternoon. Don't you think so, Miss Wesley?"

"I do see a great improvement to-day," replied Aunt Helen; "and if Roy's visits prove so beneficial, I would advise one every day.

"You should have been here a few minutes sooner," she continued, "you too would have had a good laugh; besides, you would have heard something very complimentary."

"Indeed! Well, now, you have my curiosity greatly aroused, for I rarely receive a compliment, and one from Roy would be worth hearing."

"The compliment was Paul's," said Aunt Helen, laughing.

"From you, then, Paul! Well, I am just as anxious to hear it."

"I think that she means this," said the little philosopher, in his old-fashioned way: "I thought doctors were braver than soldiers, because they saved lives."

"Thank you! Thank you very much!" said the doctor, laughing: "but remember, Paul, in spite of my greatest efforts, I have lost some patients."

"Well! you saved the Perseffer, anyhow," said Roy, "so over at our house we think you are braver than any soldier, even George Washington; don't we, Grace?"

"'Es, we do, an' we are awsul happy, dotter; you dot Bruver Paul well an' we tan have him back adain, 'tause we did n't want him ter doe ter heaven, an' 'en our farver

and murver were ever so far away too, it would be awsul sadful; ” and Grace lifted up her great dark eyes in such an appealing way to the doctor’s face that every one felt rather strange and grew suddenly very quiet. Aunt Helen turned her head away, and the doctor drew Grace closer to him, and kissed her forehead softly. Then he suddenly changed the subject, for Paul was looking rather sad, and his eyes were blinking in their old nervous fashion, which meant that he was thinking too serious thoughts. But he was quickly aroused from his reverie when Dr. Barlow began to tell them of his visit to Mill Hollow that afternoon, and of Mrs. Stein’s improved condition; he had found enough work for her to keep her constantly busy.

“Is there any one else down there, who might be starving?” asked Paul.

“Not one, I am sure,” replied the doctor; “in fact, every one is quite prosperous now in Mill Hollow. The mill is running regularly, giving steady work to many, and every house has been visited and every needy person has been looked after; so do not ever again give yourself any uneasiness about any one in Mill Hollow,” said the doctor.

“Oh, you are so kind, and won’t ever let me worry about anything,” said Paul. “You are more and more like my Dr. Andrews every day.”

“Well! that is the second compliment I received this afternoon,” said Dr. Barlow, laughing. “I am afraid you will make me quite vain, if you keep on.”

“To be considered so much like Dr. Andrews is a great compliment indeed. When he arrives, we shall all have to take a back seat,” said Aunt Helen.

Paul looked first at one, then the other, and took the

little joke rather seriously, as he said, "If you mean that I shall forget the doctor, and forget Mrs. Barlow and you, and all the rest, Aunt Helen, it's the greatest mistake in the world. And I was just thinking, Doctor," he continued, looking up at him affectionately, "that when I leave you here, it will seem something like when I left Dr. Andrews at Beechwood, only I am so glad to think you will be nearer, and that I can see you every day if I want to, and I shall never forget you as long as I live."

"Why, of course, I know you have a large corner in your heart for me, Paul, and one for us all. Your aunt is only joking, you know."

CHAPTER XXIV

EVERYTHING was in readiness at the quaint little house in the oaks, both inside and out. The windows were thrown open, for it was a balmy day in June. The dainty mull curtains fluttered back and forth in the soft breezes. The walls of the house were nearly covered with ivy, the growth of years, and the porches were laden with woodbine now in full bloom, filling the air with its delicious perfume. The branches of five large oak-trees spread over and around the house like great loving arms encircling it. The garden had been laid out according to Paul's idea, the paths widened and freshly graded, weeds and dead brushwood cleared away, new flower-beds planted, all done by old Ned before Paul left the doctor's house. Paul was standing by the gate now, taking a survey of it all, and trying to imagine just how it would impress his parents when they arrived, for they were expected that very afternoon, and Aunt Helen had gone to New York to meet them as they left the steamer.

"Of course, it couldn't be like Beechwood," he thought, "that was so large, but it looks very pretty, and puts me in mind of a beautiful picture." The June roses were in bloom, and along the fences were planted all sorts of old-fashioned flowers that Paul loved,—lilacs, peonies, hollyhocks, poppies, sweet-peas, and beds of nasturtiums and pansies were here and there.

His artistic eye took in every spot, and he finally came to the conclusion that it was not possible to make any improvement. "I believe I am growing as fond of it as Beechwood," he thought, glancing up at the house, and sweeping his eye over all the grounds, and he felt sure the travellers would all be pleased when they arrived. He never once thought of himself, and what they would think about the great change wrought in their boy when they first saw him. To those who had been with him through his long illness, he, of course, was looking well at the present time. He had gained steadily each day, and had not had the slightest drawback. His appetite was excellent, in fact, both Hulda and Aunt Helen said they never remembered his being so anxious for meal-times as he was in these days, and he drank plenty of fresh sweet milk ; he was beginning to grow fat and improve quite perceptibly, but yet, notwithstanding all this, his parents of course would see a great change. His hair was short, for one thing, and his face still quite pale, and he looked as though he had grown two inches.

The children had been listening for the arrival of every train all the afternoon, then they waited anxiously to see the station cabs with their dear ones, but they had several disappointments, and were getting very impatient.

"Pshaw! I'm tired waiting, ain't you, Persef?" called Roy, as he ran down the path, followed by Grace.

"It's pretty tiresome," replied Paul, with a sigh. "But we have to wait and can't help it."

"I think time is the contraest thing I ever knew in my life," said Roy, stamping his foot on the gravel path. "When you want it to go fast, it goes as slow as

a toad, and when you want it to go slow, it goes as fast as an engine."

"It just seems that way, but time is the same always; it never changes," said the little philosopher.

"No, it never changes, it is jes er same all er time," echoed baby Grace, "an' 'at's why the reason we has to wait, is n't it, Bruver Paul?" and she slipped her hand in his as she spoke.

"Yes, we have to, but I guess they will be here soon now. Hark! is n't that a whistle?"

All three stood perfectly still for a moment, listening. "Yes, it surely was, for there it goes again, and it is from the City too," said Paul.

"Another train's come, Hulda," called Roy, "and I guess they are in this one." They heard it arrive at the station, and then ran outside the gate to watch again for the station cabs. It is no disappointment this time, for a cab is coming toward the house, with handkerchiefs waving from it, and in another moment three little children are being hugged and kissed on the sidewalk, first by one and then another, till it seemed to Hulda that they would never reach the house.

The travellers had learned all the particulars of Paul's illness on their way from New York to Avondale. They had known something about it before, but had no knowledge of its serious nature.

"It was a risk to run, but after talking the matter over, we came to the conclusion that it would be advisable not to write you," Aunt Helen had told them.

"It was a risk, and yet I can see that it was done for the best, and, as everything has turned out all right, we will try not to grieve over what might have been," said Mrs. Arlington.

"Had I known it, I would have returned immediately," said Mr. Arlington. "Nothing could have prevented me."

There were tears in their eyes when Aunt Helen related to them all about poor little Nell Myers, and how Paul found her by the church and took her home, and then made a little book of poems to sell for her support, and she begged their forgiveness for what seemed to her like great carelessness on her part in not keeping a closer watch on his movements, and for her failure in gaining his love and confidence.

"Do not make yourself sad by brooding over it any longer, Helen dear," said Mrs. Arlington, kindly. "Your intentions were the best, and it was simply that you were not able to understand him. We have so much to be thankful for that we will not mar our present happiness by dwelling over the past."

Paul was especially delighted by the great improvement in his father's appearance: so great was it that even Roy and Grace noticed it immediately.

"I never saw you look so strong, Father," said Paul, as they all walked slowly toward the house.

"Why, yes, you look like a jolly good fellow now," said Roy. "I guess you must be strong as a giant."

"Thank you, Roy," said his father, laughing.

"'Es, I fink you do look 'ike you were as strong as er giant," echoed Grace.

"I feel almost as strong as one, I assure you, children. That trip saved my life."

"I was very sorry at first that you went away, and I often wished you were back, but now I am glad that you stayed and that they did not tell you about my sickness," said Paul.

"It would have been imprudent if I had returned in the winter, my boy; but I would have come without a moment's hesitation had I known how ill you were. But who made all these improvements?" he said, changing the subject suddenly, as he took in at a glance the alterations, the flower-beds, and the well-kept condition of the whole garden.

"Do you like it?" asked Paul, his face fairly beaming, for they were all standing in the path and making pleasant remarks about the garden.

"I told Ned how I wanted it fixed, and he did it all," said Paul. "He is a good gardener, but he can't come up to Pat."

"It is a great surprise," said Mrs. Arlington. "I really did not know that the place could be made so attractive."

"And I will tell you what I think about it," said Grandma, who thus far had not expressed her opinion, but was looking about her with admiring eyes, for it was her first visit to Avondale. "I think," she said, "that it looks so beautiful and restful here that I will make my home in Avondale hereafter, and sell my house in New York."

"Oh, will you, Grandma dear?" said Paul, throwing his arms around her. "Do you really mean it?"

"Why, that will be jolly, Grandma," said Roy.

"'Es it will. I jes love you ter 'tay with us, Drama," said Grace, all three surrounding her.

"And I would love to be with you, darlings," she said. "I find I cannot live away from you all." Then she laughed, and so did Mr. and Mrs. Arlington and Aunt Helen, and all looking at one another in a know-

ing way, as though there was some joke connected with Grandma's coming to live at Avondale.

The little philosopher, however, had commenced to blink; his thinking cap was on. There was something back of it all, he was sure. Finally he said, "Where is Aunt Helen going, Grandma? You did not say anything about her coming." At which all laughed again, with the same mysterious looks at one another, which Paul could not understand, but he felt sure of this much, that it all concerned Aunt Helen, whatever it was.

"There's a joke somewhere, but I can't find it," he said, still looking serious and thinking very hard.

This only made them laugh the louder, but finally his mother said, "We will tell you what it is after a while, for you never could guess."

"How sweet and dainty the house looks!" said Mrs. Arlington, as they went from room to room. "Everything is so clean and fresh," which remark made Hulda very happy, and her face was wreathed in smiles; in fact, every one's face looked smiling, and every heart seemed as bright and happy as it was possible to be. Yes, just as much so as when they were living at dear old Beechwood, for the little house in the oaks was growing to be dear to them and to mean home.

Dr. Andrews arrived that evening, to remain a week in Avondale. He had come as far as Chicago with the rest of the party, but was obliged to stop there on some business and take a later train, and the meeting with Paul after the long and anxious separation could be better imagined than described. The little house was filled almost to overflowing; it was a great change from the small family it had sheltered during Paul's illness.

Paul had so much to say, and so much to listen to, that he was not ready for bed when the hour came, and the great joke that he had waited to hear quite took his breath away when it was told to him.

"Before you go to bed, Paul, we will tell you what the joke was, as you called it," said Mrs. Arlington, while they all watched him anxiously to note the effect. "Aunt Helen and Dr. Andrews are engaged to be married, and in September there will be a wedding, and the parsonage next to Beechwood will be their home."

The boy said nothing for a moment, but sat as one dazed; then he sighed and said, "That is n't a joke at all." They all laughed at this, and finally Paul laughed also. But he could scarcely realize it, for he had never dreamed of such a thing as this coming, and he looked first at one smiling face, then at another, in a very bewildered way. Finally his father said, —

"Are you not going to congratulate them, my son?"

Then he arose and stood by his Aunt Helen first, and said, "I am so surprised I don't know what to say, but I'm glad, Aunt Helen," and then she drew him down on her lap and kissed him. Paul thought he never saw her look so pretty, and she never had seemed so sweet as now.

"I knew you would be glad," she said, "and are only so surprised it quite paralyzes you, does n't it?"

Then he went over to Dr. Andrews' chair, who did just as Aunt Helen did, drew him down on his knee and kissed him, while Paul said, "I am so glad, only awfully surprised, Doctor."

"And now I will be your Uncle Theodore, and not Dr. Andrews any more."

"So you will," said Paul, his face beaming. "I did n't think of that, and I always wished you could be a relative. That will sound so nice to say, Uncle Theodore; it seems to make you nearer, and you always were near to me, you know."

"And you, Paul, have always been very dear and near to me."

"Is n't it a good thing that Aunt Helen likes the poor now? She can help you in your work," said Paul, earnestly.

"I am afraid, Paul, that I can never love them as he does," said Aunt Helen, before Dr. Andrews had a chance to reply. "But I love them more than I did, and intend to do all I possibly can to aid the doctor in his works of charity."

"Oh, I'm so glad you will help him, Aunt Helen. I know that will make him happy, and it would n't, you know, if you did not love the poor and try to help him. I'm so glad you have changed your mind about them."

"I am sure Aunt Helen will make a splendid minister's wife. She is loving the poor more every day, and you will be surprised after awhile when you hear how she is helping me," said Dr. Andrews.

"And then when I grow up all three of us can work together, can't we?" said Paul.

"I hope so," replied Dr. Andrews.

After good-night kisses, his father carried him up to bed and his mother followed. He was still looked upon as somewhat of an invalid, and there had been enough excitement for one day, they thought.

"I feel a great deal wiser and a great deal older since my sickness," he said to his parents, when alone in his room. "It seems like years when I look back upon

last winter, when I found poor Nell by the church, and if it should all happen now, I should not think of taking care of her all by myself. So you see I must be wiser."

"You have learned a lesson, my boy, though it has nearly cost you your life. Of course, we all knew that you did not realize what you were doing, but these severe trials have taught you many hard lessons which perhaps you could not have learned in any other way."

"I have so many things to think about, and to be glad about, that I am not a bit homesick about Beechwood any more," said Paul, placing one arm around his mother's neck, and one around his father's, as they bent over his bed.

"It has been the happiest day that we have spent for a very long time," said his mother.

"I'm so glad that cough has left you, Father, and you look so well; that makes me happier than anything. Then that about Aunt Helen. I can't tell you how glad I am about that, and to think that she loves the poor, and will live at the parsonage, and Dr. Andrews will be my uncle." And then he continued, lowering his voice and drawing both heads closer, "I am so glad God did not take me away from you, for it would have been all dark and gloomy if you came back and did n't find me here, would n't it?"

The light was dim, and he could not see the tears in his parents' eyes that this remark caused. They kissed him, and then his father said, "Yes, it would have been very dark indeed had you been taken, but you were spared to us, as also I have been to you. And we have much to rejoice over. Now good-night, and do not talk any more, for you have had quite an exciting day for a little invalid."

That week was one long to be remembered by Paul, as well as by them all. He learned from Dr. Andrews the latest news of all the people he knew in Arlington Heights, of the Home, Bill Jones, and the progress of the new mission, which especially was of great interest to him. And for the first time he heard of the sale of the little book of poems, for which there was such a demand. To please Paul, Dr. Andrews made a visit to Mill Hollow with Dr. Barlow, who was becoming deeply interested in the work of charity started in that place. He attended all the sick free of charge, and the children loved to see him come into their houses, and somehow his very presence made them feel better, when they were ill. They always ran to meet him, when they saw him coming, to ask after Paul Arlington; and on this particular day, when Dr. Andrews accompanied him, Dr. Barlow gathered a number of them together, and Dr. Andrews stood in their midst and spoke to them for some minutes, while Dr. Barlow stepped in a house to make a call. They stood with their mouths and eyes wide open — their ears too for that matter, — taking in every kind word; and when he talked to them of little Paul Arlington, and told them that he had known him all his life, and related some incidents in Paul's past life they were delighted. "Would you like to see little Paul?" he finally asked.

And in answer there arose a chorus of childish voices, exclaiming, "Yes, we would, we would."

"You may come up to-morrow afternoon, all of you, if you wish," he said, "and Paul will be on the porch to receive you. I know he will enjoy a call from you."

When Dr. Barlow joined him again, he told him of the invitation that he had given the children. The

doctor thought it was a good idea, and wondered that he had not thought of it before.

"Can we bring him some daisies out of the field?" faltered a little ragged girl, edging up close to Dr. Barlow's side. "He liked flowers, for we used to see him bringing them to Nell."

Dr. Barlow was touched by the sweet thought of this forlorn little creature.

"Why certainly, you can bring him as many flowers as you wish," he replied.

"He loves the daisies," said Dr. Andrews, "and all wild flowers. I see you have many growing here in Avondale by the roadside, in the fields and woods, and he would be delighted with any of them."

"You may tell all the children who live in Mill Hollow that they are perfectly welcome to come," said Dr. Andrews, as they stepped in the carriage. "Leave here about half-past two, and that will bring you all to the house about three o'clock. Now don't forget," he called, while the children shouted after them, "No, we won't, we won't."

When Paul was told of this, he was delighted. "Did they really want to see me?" he asked.

"If you had been there, Paul, it would require no words from me to assure you of their delight at the prospect of calling on you. They have not forgotten you through all these weeks of your illness, and inquired about you of Dr. Barlow every time they saw him."

"Poor little things!" said Paul. "I love them all. Dr. Barlow said they wanted to see me, but he never thought of asking them up here."

It was an unusual sight in Avondale, and the people wondered what could be going on, when they saw about

forty or fifty children walking two by two from Mill Hollow, the procession in charge of older ones, who managed to keep them in line. Their arms were full of wild flowers of all sorts, gathered from the woods and meadows. There was not a well-dressed child in the whole procession, and some were barefooted and without hats, but all had made some effort to look well. Long rents had been drawn up in their clothes, and some attempts had been made to wash faces and comb hair. They were very quiet and well behaved, and their little hearts were filled with a gladness that shone in their faces, for were they not going to see Nell's angel child, and theirs too, for that matter? Nell called him that, and he was n't too proud to talk to them, as other fine people were who lived in large houses and wore fine clothes. No one was on the porch but Dr. Andrews and Paul when they arrived at the gate. Old Ned was on hand to make himself useful, and walked down to usher them in when he saw them coming up the road.

"I am very glad to see you all," Paul said, as they stepped up to the porch.

"We thought you liked flowers, so we brought all these," said the same little girl who had suggested it the day before; and as she spoke she put them down at Paul's feet, and all followed her example, until the boy stood in the very midst of a large mound of wild flowers.

"Oh, thank you! thank you!" he said again and again. "I love the wild flowers, and these are all beautiful ones;" and he stooped and lifted some to examine them more closely. Then Ned brought some large vases Mrs. Arlington gave him, which he soon filled, and placed here and there around the porch.

Dr. Andrews made them feel at their ease immediately, and talked as only he could talk to the little children of the poor. Seats were found for them all, but for a time they only looked at Paul and listened to what he had to say. He had changed wonderfully in their eyes. His face was pale and thin, and the long golden locks were gone forever; but it was the same sweet voice that addressed them, and the same courteous manners that fascinated them and made them content to watch and listen to him.

"I often thought of you," he said, "when I was down in Mill Hollow, and I wanted to get acquainted with you; but Nell, you know, was so sick, I always had to go there, and I did not have time to go anywhere else, or to stop and talk to any one. I suppose you all know I have been very ill for a long time, so of course I could not get down to see any of you. I hope your fathers and mothers are all well, and that there is no one sick in Mill Hollow."

Dr. Andrews entertained them with a "Punch and Judy" show, which brought forth perfect shouts of laughter, after which they were told to amuse themselves in any way they desired. There was croquet, base-ball, bean-bags, a large swing in the grape arbor back, which they soon took possession of, and the garden in the oaks never before presented such a gay appearance, and never before gave so much pleasure to so many little hearts. The children ran hither and thither over the lawn and through the trees, with their little host walking among them, finding something to say to each one, while on the porch the family and some neighbors had gathered to watch them.

It was a great treat and an entirely unexpected one

when ice cream and cake were passed around among them.

Roy was on hand at the refreshment hour. At first he said that he would not be there at all, as Mr. Timothy Jenks expected Grace with him to spend the afternoon at his house (their little quarrel having all been made up), but the refreshments were too great an attraction to miss; besides, Grace was anxious to see the children. One boy attracted Roy above all the rest. He was very ragged and forlorn, but a large mole on his cheek was what interested him, and he followed him about, looking up in his face every chance he could get. Finally he asked, "Say, boy, does your sore hurt you much?"

"What sore?" asked the boy, rather gruffly. "I hain't got no sore."

"I mean that big brown one on your cheek," said Roy, surprised that he could forget he had such a sore as that.

Then Mill Hollow's little ragamuffin thought he was ridiculing him, and on the spur of the moment came very near knocking him down, when he suddenly remembered where he was, and would surely be sent home for such an act.

Then he said instead, "You know that hain't no sore; it's a mould."

"Well, what is a mould? I never saw one in all my life," said Roy; and he looked so serious, and spoke so earnestly, that the boy began to think that he was telling the truth, and actually meant only to sympathize with him, thinking it was a large sore.

"Lots of people have 'em," he said.

"Well, I never saw them. Do they hurt, and what makes them?"

"I don't know what makes 'em: born with 'em, I guess."

"Well, I'm glad I was n't born with one," he said, as he skipped off, whistling merrily.

Sometime after refreshments, the children were given a little hint that it was about time that they should take their departure; for there was no telling how long they would have remained had this not been done. But just then a little girl pulled the sleeve of Dr. Andrews by whose side she was standing, and said timidly,

"Say, mister, before we go, will yer tell him to sing fer us jest like he did for Nell Myers?"

"Why, yes, little one," replied Dr. Andrews, kindly, patting her on her head, "I am sure he will sing a song for you and all the rest, if you would like to hear him."

She was a frail-looking little thing, and she had been hoping all the afternoon that Paul would sing for them; but when the time came for them to leave and he had not yet done so, she was so disappointed that she could not resist the temptation to ask for a song.

Dr. Andrews spoke a few words to Paul, then to his mother, and turning to the children, who stood grouped around the porch, he said, "A little girl is very anxious to hear Paul sing before she returns home; so, if you would all like to hear him, you may remain a little while longer."

They required no coaxing to stay, and looked pleased and eager to hear him.

"Sing the little Springtime Song, Paul," said his mother, "and stand right there on the porch, close to the window, and I will go inside and play the accompaniment."

The piano stood close to the window; so Paul could hear very plainly. He hesitated a little at first, for he had not attempted to sing since his illness.

"Do you think I can, Mother dear?" he whispered.

"Certainly, I think you can at least sing one song," she replied, as she walked in the door.

Then Paul turned toward the children and said, —

"I do not think I can sing very well; but I will do the best I can. You see, I have not sung since my illness."

The piano inside struck up; and with his hands behind him, Paul straightened himself up, and sang sweetly this little song, the tune of which he had composed, —

"Brightly the flowers are blooming,
Springtime has come at last,
Hearts that were sad now are happy,
For winter days have all passed,
Every day some joy 't is bringing
Making the earth bright and gay,
And like the birds, my own heart feels like
Singing, all through the bright sunshiny day.

"Hark, hear the robin now singing
Calling me out to see
All that the springtime is bringing,
Each day to charm you and me.
Buds everywhere are expanding,
On every bush and tree,
And the whole world is with joy running over,
And singing with robin and me."

When he had finished, they all called for more. But his mother thought it advisable for him not to sing again, for she noted that his voice was weaker than she had imagined.

SPRINGTIME HAS COME

Andante.

PIANO.

1 Bright-ly the flow-ers are bloom - ing, Springtime has come at last, . . .
2 Hark! hear the robin now sing - ing, Call-ing me out to see . . .

Hearts that were sad now are hap - py, For win-ter days have all passed; . .
All that the springtime is bring - ing Each day to charm you and me; . . .

Ev-'ry day some joy 'tis bring - ing, Mak-ing the earth bright and gay,
Buds ev-'ry-where are ex-pand - ing On ev - e - ry bush and tree,

And like the birds my own heart feels like singing All thro' the bright sunny day.
And the whole world is with joy run-ning o-ver, And sing-ing with rob-in and me.

Ped. *

"Paul will not be able to sing any more for you this time," Dr. Andrews told them; "some other time, perhaps, when he is stronger, he will sing as many songs as you wish; but would you not like to hear Roy sing his Jolly Sailor Song? I am sure he will, won't you, Roy?" he asked.

But, in answer, Roy slid behind his father's chair, by which he had been standing, peeping out with a mischievous twinkle in his eye.

"Come, come, Roy," said his father, "don't act foolishly; and it is getting late; the children must be off."

"Oh, I don't want to sing the Sailor Song," he replied; "I'm not going to be a sailor, so I don't like to sing I am one."

Paul had slipped around behind the chair, and said, "Well, if you don't want to sing, why don't you speak your little piece you learned in school? You look just exactly like a soldier when you speak it; and I know they will like it," he whispered.

"Do you really think I look like a soldier when I speak it, Persef?"

"Yes, I always do; it just seems to me you are ready to fight in a war right off, whenever I hear you and look at you."

"All right, then, I'll speak it, Persef," he replied; coming out shyly from behind the chair, just as Paul said, addressing the children, "He won't sing, but he will speak a piece for you; perhaps you will like it better."

Suddenly Roy seemed to forget his shyness, and, with his head thrown back, he stepped out boldly to the edge of the porch, and began, with an earnestness

in every word, speaking loud and clear, with a proud ring in his voice to the very end,—

“When I ’m a man, I tell you what !
I ’ll do brave deeds each day,
I ’ll be a senator, I ’m sure,
And vote for laws to help the poor.
I ’ll give the boys a holiday,
With nothing to do but romp and play ;
And when there ’s a war, I ’ll be a general *true*
And beat off the rebels left and right !
I ’ll *always* be in the *thickest* fight.
I don’t know what more I ’ll do,
But *maybe* I ’ll be the President too.”

As soon as he had finished, he turned and ran into the house as fast as he could go. They all laughed and clapped, but could not get him out again; but when he saw them, from his hiding-place behind a curtain, shaking hands with Dr. Andrews, then Paul, he sneaked out and slid up to Paul’s side, and stood there with baby Grace.

Paul saw Dr. Andrews hold out his hand to shake that of each boy and girl, and so he thought of course that he must do the same, as they passed, one by one, on their way to the gate.

Roy and Grace felt very proud of Paul as he stood there; and Roy wondered why it was that he could n’t make the poor people like him as much as they did the “Perseffer.”

Over on the grass stood old Ned, with his face wreathed in smiles, watching the little scene before him, Paul, of course, the greatest attraction in his eyes.

“I ’clar to goodness, he am jes’ a trueborn lil

gen'leman on ebry 'casion," he was thinking, "and dem chillen does think heaps ob him, dat am shuah."

On the porch stood Mr. and Mrs. Arlington, grandma, and Aunt Helen, all with smiling faces, and it is needless to say with happy hearts too.

Dr. Andrews turned to Aunt Helen and said, "It is certainly true, as your mother has said, 'He is a little philosopher and philanthropist as well as a little poet.'"



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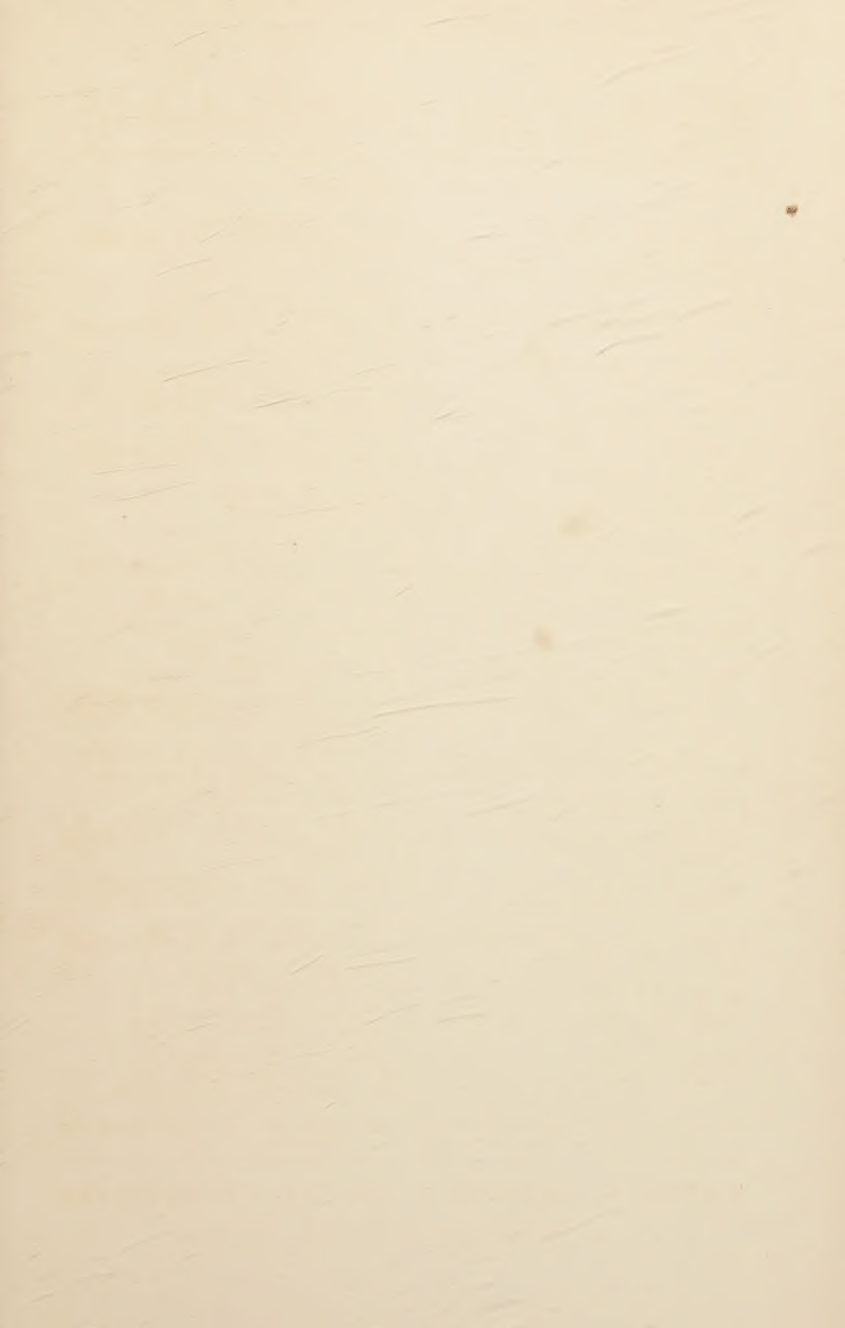
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